A major challenge to cancer control is that despite the availability of screening tests for breast and gynecologic cancer, they are underused by most women (Breen & Kessler, 1994). Ethnic minority women, in particular, tend to use them the least (Calle, Flanders, Thun, & Martin, 1993; Estrada, Trevino, & Ray, 1990; Giuliano, Papenfuss, deZapien, Tilousi, & Nuvayestewa, 1998), which may result in their lower survival and higher mortality rates than those reported for Caucasian women. This discrepancy in rates points to a significant and disproportionate cancer burden among ethnic women, which has profound implications for women, families, communities, and the nation and is a continuing concern for healthcare providers (Hoffman-Goetz & Mills, 1997).

If present minority birth and immigration rates continue, the nation’s racial and ethnic subgroups will comprise a majority of the total population by the early part of the 21st century (Bouvier & Gardner, 1986). In 1984, the U.S. government made the health status of minorities a national priority. In 1995, the Department of Health and Human Services identified national screening objectives, including priorities for cancer prevention for minority subcultures (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Public Health Service, 1995). Lack of data about breast and gynecologic screening practices among ethnic minorities is a barrier to accomplishing these objectives (Choudhry, Srivastava, & Fitch, 1998).

Martha J. Foxall, PhD, RN, FAAN, is a professor and chair in the Parent-Child, Administration, Education, and Science Department, and Cecilia R. Barron, PhD, RN, CS, and Julia F. Houfek, PhD, RN, CS, are associate professors, all in the College of Nursing at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. (Submitted November 1999. Accepted for publication July 18, 2000.)

**Ethnic Influences on Body Awareness, Trait Anxiety, Perceived Risk, and Breast and Gynecologic Cancer Screening Practices**

Martha J. Foxall, PhD, RN, FAAN, Cecilia R. Barron, PhD, RN, CS, and Julia F. Houfek, PhD, RN, CS

**Key Points . . .**

- Despite the availability of breast and gynecologic screening tests, they are underused by most women, and ethnic minority women tend to use them the least.
- Little is known about the influence of psychosocial variables on early screening practices in ethnic minority women.
- Ethnicity was a stronger predictor of perceived risk for gynecologic cancer than perceived risk for breast cancer as well as predicted frequency of breast screening practices (breast self-examination and mammogram) and gynecologic exams.
- Specific nursing interventions may be designed to help African American women cope with their anxiety, especially related to mammography, and American Indian women consider the role that body awareness plays in gynecologic screening.
- Ethnic groups are not homogeneous; therefore, caution must be used in designing nursing interventions to avoid stereotyping.