

# Breast Cancer Screening Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Among Korean American Women

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**Purpose/Objectives:** To describe the knowledge and beliefs about breast cancer and breast cancer screening and practices of clinical breast examination (CBE) and mammography of Korean American women.

**Design:** Cross-sectional survey.

**Setting:** Two Korean churches in a mid-sized South-eastern U.S. city.

**Sample:** A convenience sample of 107 Korean women ages 40 and older.

**Methods:** Data were collected using Champion's Health Belief Model instrument (susceptibility, seriousness, benefits, and barriers) and the Breast Cancer Knowledge test through mailed questionnaires.

**Main Research Variables:** Knowledge and beliefs about breast cancer screening and practices of CBE and mammography.

**Findings:** The percentages of Korean American women who ever had a CBE and mammography were 67 and 58, respectively. Among the Health Belief Model variables, women who never had a CBE had significantly lower knowledge scores and higher perceived barriers to CBE than those who had. Women who never had a mammogram reported significantly higher perceived barriers to mammography. Logistic regression analyses demonstrated that husband's nationality, regular checkups, and encouragement from family members and physicians were significant predictors of CBE and mammography use.

**Conclusions:** The frequency of breast cancer screening practices among Korean American women is below national objectives.

**Implications for Nursing Practice:** As healthcare professionals in a culturally diverse nation, nurses need to increase their awareness of cultural variations and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate breast health education. Additional studies with women from a variety of settings are needed to validate present study findings.

Asian Americans, largely because of immigration, are the fastest growing minority in the United States and comprise many diverse ethnic groups. The 1997 census indicated that 9,253,000 Asians were living in the United States, a 160% increase over the 1980 census count of 3,466,847 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1998). Asian Americans

## Key Points . . .

- The incidence of breast cancer among Asian American women is increasing.
- The Health Belief Model is a useful framework to understand Korean American women's breast cancer screening behaviors.
- Family members and physicians play an important role in fostering Korean American women's breast cancer screening behaviors.
- Nurses must modify breast cancer screening programs to reflect the cultural diversity among Asian American women.

currently constitute 3% of the population, and this number is expected to increase to 11% by the year 2050, representing a 300% overall increase in size (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1996).

Among Asian American women, breast cancer rates have increased relatively rapidly, doubling between 1973 and 1986 (Stanford, Herrinton, Schwartz, & Weiss, 1995) and increasing sixfold between 1983 and 1987 (Ziegler et al., 1993). Breast cancer rates among Asian American women now are approaching those of non-Hispanic Caucasian women (Stanford et al.). Furthermore, late stage of diagnosis, high recurrence rates, and poor survival are evident among Asian American women diagnosed with breast cancer (Jenkins & Kagawa-Singer, 1994; Lin-Fu, 1993).

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among Korean American women, with an age-adjusted rate of 28.5 per 100,000 compared with a rate among non-

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