

Paper Session B2: Reaching the Public: The Impact of Communication Methods on Pediatric Health Screening and Intervention

Misperceptions of Breast Health Knowledge Among Adolescent Girls

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Purpose and Objectives: Over the past decade, public health messages about breast cancer prevention and early detection have been broadly disseminated. Expanded public knowledge about screening and life style risks are common goals in these efforts. Several reports suggest teen aged girls have breast cancer fears and misunderstand the factors that contribute to their risk of developing breast cancer. This study describes selected breast health knowledge and ethnic differences in awareness of a large sample of these girls. Teaching breast awareness and healthy lifestyle behaviors to adolescent females with the premise that this information/skill will increase the likelihood they will continue the practice into adulthood, is the objective of a community program. The Biden Breast Health Initiative provides breast health education to high school girls throughout the state of Delaware.

Design: A 15 item instrument consisting of true/ false questions on knowledge/awareness; 6 questions assessed common misperceptions,

Setting: 42 High schools (public, private, parochial, vocational, alternative, charter, special education) throughout the state of Delaware.

Sample: From 2,439 female high school respondents who participated in the program in 2008-2009, a subset (n=1889) was included in the analyses. Caucasian (55.8%), African American (35.5%) and Hispanic (8.7%), with an age range from 14 to 19.

Analysis: Chi Square (question level) and ANOVA (racial differences) analyses were used.

Findings: Mean score for girls across the misperception questions was 60% (SD=0.22) demonstrating limited levels of knowledge. There were significant racial differences with Caucasians marginally higher. Importantly, significant ethnic differences were found at the question level in four of six questions.

Implications for Nursing: We must carefully consider the consequences of our public health messages. Although it is essential that our efforts continue to promote early detection and prevention, perhaps targeted programs to reduce misperceptions are warranted.