“HPV Self-Sampling in Primary Care Clinics in Minnesota: A Pre-Implementation Study”
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Project Summary

Since the implementation of cervical cancer screening methods, such as cervical cytology or Pap test, cervical cancer rates have been declining. Nevertheless, racial/ethnic disparities in cervical cancer screening continue to exist, and are caused by a wide range of factors, including limited awareness about HPV and cervical cancer, difficulties accessing health care services, and cultural or religious beliefs. Self-sampling techniques for the collection of HPV specimens have been proposed as an effective alternative to overcome some of these barriers. Most research in this area, however, has focused on mail-in self-sampling kits, and has overlooked the potential to help address cervical cancer screening equity in primary care. The overall goal of this study was to develop an understanding of multilevel perspectives on the implementation of an HPV self-sampling practice in primary care settings in Minnesota (MN) by 1) interviewing key health care personnel from health systems across the state of MN (Aim 1), and 2) surveying minority female patients across the state of MN on their perspectives of HPV self-sampling (Aim 2).

Results

Funding from the Consortium was used to support efforts of Aim 2, which intended to collect survey responses from 335 racially/ethnically-diverse women across the state of MN on their awareness, self-efficacy, and preferences of HPV self-sampling.

To date, eight community-based organizations (Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL); Somali, Latino, and Hmong Partnerships for Health and Wellness (SoLaHmo); Minnesota Cancer Alliance; Hmong HealthCare Professionals Coalition; American Cancer Society; WellShare International; CAPI USA; and Masonic Cancer Center) have partnered on the project and 125 survey responses have been collected through these partnerships.

The current COVID-19 pandemic posed many significant challenges for the research project. First, the translators hired on to complete the Spanish and Somali translations of the survey were full-time community health workers and so, had many competing priorities to attend to. Consequently, the Spanish and Somali survey translations were not completed until late May. Secondly, getting participation and buy-in from community organizations was also time-intensive. Many organizations had limited bandwidth to focus on efforts outside of their core services; few, prioritized research. Despite reaching out to organizations as early as March, Miss Xiong was not able to get any interest from organizations until early May. Once partnerships began to materialize in early summer, outreach for the survey finally kickstarted.
Unfortunately, many community organizations had difficulty engaging with their clienteles due to the pandemic restrictions and had to rely primarily on passive, online dissemination efforts (via newsletters, social media blasts and advertisements, etc.) to push out the survey. As a result, recruitment for the survey will continue throughout this fall with an anticipated end date of November 2021.

Analysis of the survey data will also commence in November, wherein results will be prepared in a manuscript to be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal beginning Spring semester of 2022.

**Future project plans**

The funded project is the dissertation research of Miss Xiong. She intends to complete and defend her dissertation in Spring of 2022. Following the completion of her dissertation, Miss Xiong will submit a post-doctoral award to continue building an evidence base for HPV self-sampling through a series of pilot and large randomized controlled trials.