

USING THE TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL OF CHANGE AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING THE BREAST CANCER SCREENING BEHAVIORS OF OLDER WOMEN: A TOOL FOR NURSE PROVIDERS

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Key Words: Breast cancer screening; behavior change; older women

PURPOSE:

A quasi-experimental study, addressing breast cancer screening behaviors of older African-American and Caucasian women over the age of 50, was conducted in eastern North Carolina. Using U.S. census data to identify the population, women from 10 counties were randomly selected for participation. A cohort of 2,000 women was identified and the women were interviewed in 1993, 1996, and 1999 about their health, preventive health behaviors, attitudes toward breast cancer and their screening behaviors. Using the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM), the **purpose of this study** was to characterize the women as according to the model's stages of behavior and identify those factors that predicted moving from one stage to another.

METHODS:

For this study, data from a subset of 707 women were analyzed. These women participated in all 3 interviews and did not reside in the 5 counties where a community-based intervention to increase breast cancer screening awareness was conducted. As a comparison group, these women represented the secular trend in screening behaviors among older women in the rural eastern part of the state. As such, they are also representative of women who present to advance practice nurses, and primary care providers for care in this underserved area. Regression analysis and ANOVA were utilized to determine the degree that specific factors identified from the literature (beliefs about cancer and screening, prior mammography behaviors, gynecological examination, provider recommendation, normative beliefs, access, income, and education) influenced subsequent screening behaviors.

FINDING / DISCUSSION:

The findings from this analysis support the use of the TTM as a useful and viable approach for practitioners to use when addressing the breast cancer screening behaviors of older women who present for care. In addition, allowing providers to effectively stage their clients and target those factors that are most likely to positively influence behaviors will result in greater likelihood of breast cancer screening utilization and subsequently reduced mortality among those at greatest risk.