

Alabama

Reduction in Screening Disparities by Breast and Cervical Cancer Coalition

Producing Results

The Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Coalition reduced disparity in use of mammography screening between African American and white women. In Choctaw County, the proportion of African American who received mammography screenings increased from 29% to 61% over 8 years, surpassing the rate for white women by 13%. According to data from the eight counties served by the Alabama REACH program, the gap in mammography screening rates between African American and white women decreased by 76% over the same 8-year time span.

Public Health Problem

In Alabama, and across the United States, African Americans bear a higher burden of cancer than their white counterparts. In 2005, there were approximately 3,820 new cases of invasive breast cancer among women in Alabama, and an estimated 730 deaths due to the illness. In certain counties, African American women experienced a higher death rate from breast cancer as compared to white women (30/100,000 vs. 20/100,000, respectively). Additionally, there was a decrease in the percentage of African American women aged 65 years or older who reported receiving a Papanicolaou (Pap) test within the last 3 years.

Taking Action

With CDC support, the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Coalition at the University of Alabama at Birmingham has engaged a variety of stakeholders, key leaders and concerned citizens from community-based and faith-based organizations, state health departments, grassroots agencies, and health care organizations (both public and private) in efforts to promote awareness of, increase participation in, and navigate breast and cervical cancer screening services in selected counties throughout the state to reduce mortality rates. A dedicated volunteer core working group that consists of trained community health advisors, nurses, other health care professionals, and clergy routinely disseminate culturally appropriate health information and conduct numerous community-based outreach efforts to support, encourage, and assist women to access screening services and navigate the complex health care system. This tailored approach helps to eliminate barriers women face when attempting to access health services.

Implications and Impact

The Coalition has successfully addressed barriers related to the individual, community systems and agents of change that prevent women from participating in breast and cervical cancer screening. In Choctaw County, African American women were much less likely to get a mammography screening compared to white women. In 8 years, the proportion of African American who received mammography screenings increased from 29% to 61%, surpassing the rate for white women by 13%. In Dallas County, a lower mammography screening rate among African American women (30%) compared to white women (50%) was virtually eliminated within the same time frame. According to data from the eight counties that the Alabama REACH program focuses on, the gap in mammography screening rates between African American and white women decreased by 76% over the same 8-year time span.