

Connecticut



Reaching Out, Enrolling More Women in Heart-Healthy Activities

Public Health Problem

Nearly 65 million people in the United States have cardiovascular disease, and more than half of them are women, according to 2001 estimates from the American Heart Association. Cardiovascular disease is the nation's leading cause of death. In Connecticut, more than a third (10,560) of the state's 29,816 deaths in 2001 were due to cardiovascular disease; 55.4% of these cardiovascular disease deaths were among women. Some minority women are affected more by cardiovascular disease than other women. For example, African American women in Connecticut were hospitalized for cardiovascular disease at a higher rate (1,356 per 100,000) than were white women (1,229 per 100,000).

Program Example

WISEWOMAN (Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation) projects across the country screen uninsured women for risk factors for heart disease and other chronic diseases, deliver nutrition and physical activity interventions, and provide referrals to medical care as needed. The Connecticut WISEWOMAN project wanted to enroll more uninsured women and encourage greater participation in the lifestyle intervention portion of the project, Stay Healthy for Life. The goal was to ensure that the project was using effective community outreach strategies for enrollment and to identify barriers that prevent women from engaging in heart-healthy lifestyle behavior changes. To achieve this goal, the project conducted focus groups with women in the Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program who were eligible for WISEWOMAN services but chose not to participate in the program. Focus groups allowed project officers to understand respondent's attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and experiences. Women in the focus groups suggested strategies for how the WISEWOMAN staff could improve patient communication, health care provider outreach, and attendance in the lifestyle intervention activities. The staff used this information to refine outreach efforts and tailor messages for women in the targeted community.

Implications and Impact

One community health center in Middletown, Connecticut, used the focus group feedback to promote outreach with affiliated health care staff in five satellite sites. As a result of the outreach, the number of enrollees in the WISEWOMAN project increased by 20–25%. Information from focus groups with participants from the targeted population can be used to improve a program's design and operation. The information from the Connecticut WISEWOMAN project is being shared with all the sites providing WISEWOMAN services to help them develop effective strategies for outreach activities and boost enrollment in the WISEWOMAN project.

Contact Information

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