

New Outreach Workers Will Fight Against Cervical Cancer Among Vietnamese Women

Cervical cancer devastates the lives of many women around the world, with nearly 300,000 women dying from this disease every year. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Vietnamese-American women have the highest age-adjusted incidence rate of cervical cancer in the United States: Out of every 100,000 Vietnamese women, 43 will contract cervical cancer.

To examine the high rates of cervical cancer among Vietnamese women in Santa Clara County, Health Science students from San Jose State University (SJSU) conducted a survey that asked questions about basic demographics in order to isolate the correct population, and also asked other, more revealing questions about topics like health coverage, education, and number of sexual partners, with the hope of exposing risk factors associated with this disease.

The factor which had the most association with other risk factors was a lack of health insurance. The respondents who did not have health insurance, shown in Figure 1, visited a primary doctor less frequently and were less educated about cervical cancer and its causes. Figure 2 demonstrates that there is a distinct presence of cervical cancer in this community, as 38% of the respondents had a family member who either had an abnormal PAP or who actually had cervical cancer.

Figure 1: Does Respondent Have Health Insurance?

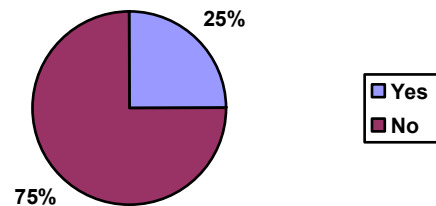
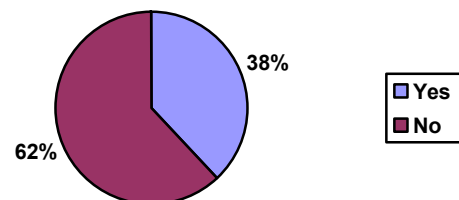


Figure 2: Has Anyone in Family Had Cervical Cancer or Abnormal PAP?



Based on these survey results, the SJSU students recommend moving forward to develop an intervention for cervical cancer among Vietnamese women. Implementing an educational, outreach program for both Vietnamese women and their healthcare providers will increase community awareness, open up more resources avenues, and improve both quality of care and access to necessary health screenings. The educational outreach program will be focused on primary prevention for cervical cancer. The program ultimately intends to decrease the incidence of cervical cancer among Vietnamese women in Santa Clara County.

Ten bilingual Vietnamese women will be recruited from community health clinics serving Vietnamese women. They will be trained as Vietnamese Women Outreach Workers, or VWOWs. The women recruited will be staff members or volunteers at the clinics. The VWOWs will be trained to provide culturally appropriate health education workshops on preventing and understanding cervical cancer to Vietnamese women. VWOWs will conduct outreach both within the community health clinics and externally in local communities, and they will assist the uninsured and underserved with finding and obtaining adequate healthcare. In addition to reaching out to Vietnamese women, the VWOWs will also work to educate the healthcare providers serving Vietnamese women.

This program will work towards these objectives:

- Healthcare providers will offer PAP tests to Vietnamese women who need them.

- Healthcare providers will increase their knowledge about social and cultural behaviors of Vietnamese women, allowing them to provide quality healthcare.
- Vietnamese women will seek a PAP test from their healthcare providers when needed.
- Vietnamese women will know what the signs and symptoms of cervical cancer are.
- Vietnamese women will be aware of the risk factors for cervical cancer.