Adapting and implementing cancer education to increase screenings and vaccinations in refugee families

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BACKGROUND
Refugees face health problems that originate from the conditions of their home country, develop during their migration experience, or emerge after resettlement in the United States. Cancer prevention education and screening among refugees are not standard services provided by resettlement agencies. Services exist that could address health of refugees, but complex barriers exist that prevent their use. Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) is a program that provides breast, cervical and liver cancer education to refugee women and links them to appropriate health services using lay health educators (LHEs) and is funded by the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas.

Methods of Cancer Education
- Refugees community leaders/liaisons from each refugee group
- Two research-tested intervention programs and a peer-reviewed program selected to be adapted and expanded upon to fit unique needs of communities
- Continuous consultation with Board for adaptation of material
- Further adaptation of materials conducted after LHEs were trained on the cancers
- Translation of material by outside services and LHEs; crosschecked for accuracy
- Conducting educational classes in community in appropriate languages
- Regular staff meetings in place to problem solve and adapt/change material if needed

Implementation of Cancer Education
- Train Lay Health Educators
- Adapt education to fit cultural differences
- Role play/practice
- Conduct outreach, enrollment into program
- Conduct individual and group education classes
- Assist interested participants into free/reduced cost screenings and vaccinations

RESULTS
Three culturally and linguistically appropriate cervical, breast, and liver cancer education materials were created. LHEs are currently conducting group and individual classes in their communities. Weekly staff meetings will assist in problem solving issues they face and changing material if need be.

Content of Education
- Ice Breaker discussions
- Motivational Interviewing techniques
- Participatory based education
- Example pictures
- Example scenario stories
- Education videos in appropriate languages

- Through adaptation process, it was decided that a general cancer class should be added to get people interested in the topics and to lay a foundation for understanding what cancer is
- Training of LHEs in background information, their role as educators, how to effectively deliver education classes in group and individual settings is an ongoing process, as is adaptation of material to fit cultural needs of communities
- Involvement and support of community leaders throughout entire process has assisted in program acceptance in communities and the reduction of barriers, such as cultural acceptance, male involvement, child care issues, and transportation
- Positive experience in program by word-of-mouth is essential to reaching cultural groups that see these topics as being taboo, inappropriate to discuss openly, or that cannot be prevented/cured by western medicine

REFERENCES

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