

AN EVALUATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BELIEFS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN AND THEIR FEMALE SIGNIFICANT OTHERS REGARDING PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING

This study examines the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of African-American men and their female significant others regarding prostate cancer screening. Study flyers and a television interview were used to recruit participants into the study that took place in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Six focus groups were conducted: four with African-American men and two with female significant others. A total of 32 people participated in the study. The groups expressed multiple apprehensions toward prostate cancer screening, including feelings of vulnerability, compromised manhood, and discomfort. They also shared motivators for screening, including female significant others, physician recommendation, early education, and church influence. (*Ethn Dis.* 2006;16:234–238)

Key Words: African-American Men, Digital Rectal Exam, Focus Groups, Health Beliefs, Prostate Cancer Screening, PSA

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INTRODUCTION

Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death among African-American men.^{1,2} The age-adjusted incidence rate for prostate cancer among African-American men (284.6 per 100,000 population) is more than 60% greater than among Caucasian men (175.6 per 100,000 population).³ In addition, the death rate among African-American men is more than twice that of Caucasian men.³ Digital rectal exam (DRE) and prostate specific antigen (PSA) testing are useful tools in screening for prostate abnormalities among men who are at increased risk. Although routine screening for prostate cancer among all men is controversial, the US Preventive Services Task Force review of recent evidence reported that African-American men >45 years were among those most likely to benefit from prostate cancer screening.⁴ For most cancers, including prostate cancer, patients diagnosed at an earlier stage tend to have survival rates significantly better than those diagnosed at a later stage. In fact, 94% of men whose tumors are diagnosed at the localized stages are alive five years after diagnosis, compared to 30% of men diagnosed with advanced stages.⁵ Approximately 27% of prostate cancer cases among African-American men are diagnosed at an advanced stage, compared to 18% among Caucasian men.⁶

Recent data suggests that only 53.4% of men age ≥ 50 years reported receiving a PSA test, and 52% reported having a DRE within the past year.^{1,2} As expected, screening rates are significantly lower among those who report

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they do not have a regular healthcare provider (25.5% and 23.1%) or are without health insurance (28.2% and 26.4% for the PSA and DRE, respectively). The American Cancer Society currently recommends that men at high risk, including African-American men, begin annual screening at age 45.⁵ Although the reasons for higher rates of prostate cancer mortality among African-American men are unknown, lower screening rates among this population may be a contributing factor to the observed racial health disparity.⁷ Etzioni and colleagues⁸ reviewed data from Medicare claim forms and noted that the annual rate of prostate cancer screening among African-American men was 31% in 1998 compared to 38% among Caucasian men.

Several research studies have examined the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of African-American men relative to prostate cancer screening.^{9–14} Much of this research has been done in focus groups and surveys with eligible men. The present study includes data on the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about prostate cancer screening both from African-American men and from female significant others of African-American