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

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

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