Breast Health Awareness

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Background and Purpose

The purpose of this Capstone project was to increase breast health awareness among college-aged females at the University of Cincinnati. Breast cancer early detection methods are limited for women younger than 40 years age. The American Cancer Society (ACS, 2010) recommends that women this age have a clinical breast examination every three years and that an optional method is monthly breast self-examination. This makes them a vulnerable population, as well as increases the need for personal health behavior modification in young women. Women younger than 40, who are diagnosed with breast cancer, typically are diagnosed at more advanced stages with poorer outcomes (Sariego, 2010). The goal of this project was to increase awareness of lifestyle modifications which can be utilized to promote breast health and early detection of disease in this specific population.

Project Plan and Implementation

A total of 69 women ages 18-22 years and members of UC Kappa Alpha Theta participated in the project. Seeing as this project involved human subjects, a form was submitted to the UC Institutional Review Board, and the project was determined not to be human research. In order to evaluate the learning needs and knowledge base of the identified population, a pre-test questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire consisted of multiple choice questions addressing breast health awareness knowledge, and breast health belief and behaviors items using a five-point Likert-type rating scale. The pre-test questionnaire assessed their knowledge base and behaviors relating to breast health. Based upon these results, a teaching plan was developed to educate young women on knowledge deficits. This educational plan consisted of a powerpoint presentation focusing upon risk factors, lifestyle modifications, and instruction for breast self examination. In addition to the powerpoint, breast models were utilized to exemplify a healthy breast, a breast with a cyst, and a breast with an abnormal lump. These breast models facilitated a hands-on experience for the learners. A brochure supplemented the powerpoint presentation and provided a tangible resource for personal use. A post-test was then administered to evaluate this educational intervention. The post-test questionnaire was comprised of the same knowledge-based questions, along with additional questions to assess relevancy and benefit of an educational intervention among college-aged females.

Outcome

Data from the post-test questionnaire was statistically analyzed and it was determined that knowledge level greatly increased among this specific group of sorority women after an educational intervention was implemented in regards to breast health awareness and breast self examination. Knowledge in regards to risk factors associated with breast cancer increased by approximately 60%. Understanding of how to properly perform a breast self exam increased as well. The likelihood to perform a breast self examination, along with the confidence level in regards to performing a breast self exam improved. An educational intervention among college-aged females was perceived as being very beneficial, by these women. Based upon this project, it would be recommended that the breast health knowledge and behaviors of other young college-aged females be assessed to determine their educational needs. Further information could be quite beneficial in regards to breast health awareness and available resources among college-aged females to further identify any existing health disparities and the need for necessary intervention.

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References

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Sariego, J. (2010). Breast cancer in the young patient. *The American Surgeon Library 76*(12), 1397-1400.