Contextualizing the Survivorship Experiences of Haitian Immigrant Women With Breast Cancer: Opportunities for Health Promotion

Erin Kobetz, PhD, MPH, Janelle Menard, PhD, MPH, Noella Dietz, PhD, Gabrielle Hazan, BA, Hosanna Soler-Vila, PhD, Suzanne Lechner, PhD, Joshua Diem, PhD, and Pascale Auguste, RN

Widespread adoption of mammography and increased treatment efficacy has reduced morbidity and mortality from breast cancer significantly among women in the United States (Lewis et al., 2010). However, that decline has not been equitable across different ethnic groups. Foreign-born minorities continue to be affected disproportionately by adverse disease outcomes, in part because of advanced stage of disease at diagnosis (Gany, Shah, & Changrani, 2006; Saint-Jean & Crandall, 2005). In the United States, recent immigrants and ethnic minorities tend to be diagnosed with late-stage (stages III and IV) breast cancer, for which the prognosis for survival is poor (Echeverría & Carрасquillo, 2006; Kobetz et al., 2010; Summers, Saltzstein, Blair, Tsukamoto, & Sadler, 2010).

A growing body of research has documented the implications of late-stage diagnosis and breast cancer survivorship among ethnically diverse women (Ashipping-Giwa, Padilla, Bohórquez, Tejero, & Garcia, 2006; Chung, Cimprich, Janz, & Mills-Wisneski, 2009; Gibson & Hendricks, 2006). However, Haitian immigrants, who are among one of the fastest growing Black ethnic groups in the United States (Gany, Trinh-Shervin, & Aragones, 2008), are a notable omission from the literature. The current study aimed to fill that gap. The current article will describe data from a series of focus groups conducted with Haitian immigrant women breast cancer survivors to document the unique barriers they face in managing their disease and to understand the impact of such barriers on their survivorship experiences.

Methods

Community-Based Participatory Research

The current study was conducted as part of an ongoing community-based participatory research (CBPR) initiative in Little Haiti, a community in Miami, FL. CBPR is a research methodology, increasingly popular in nursing, public health, and medicine, that invites community participation throughout the research process, from study conceptualization to dissemination of findings (Isreal et al., 2003). Accordingly, CBPR reflects, and often is grounded in, community members’ socio-cultural orientation to health and disease prevention,