RESEARCH BRIEFS

Challenges of Identifying Asian Women for Breast Cancer Screening

Mei-yu Yu, PhD, Amy D. Seetoo, AM, MLS, MBA, and Mo Qu, MS

Purpose/Objectives: To emphasize the need for multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive list of potential respondents for a study of breast cancer screening behavior among Asian American women.

Design: Descriptive, pilot.

Setting: An urban Michigan county.

Sample: 616 Chinese women age 40 and older.

Methods: Comparison of multiple data sources, including lists from membership directories of local Chinese organizations, a commercial survey company, health promotion events, and brief telephone interviews.

Findings: Of the 616 eligible women, 32% were identified through the membership directories of local Chinese organizations, 28% from a list obtained from the survey company, 22% from telephone directories, 10% from the attendance lists of health promotion events, and 8% from more than one source.

Conclusions: Multiple sources are required to obtain a comprehensive list for specialized populations. Every data source has its advantages and disadvantages. The use of diverse sources helps to offset the limitations of each individual one.

Implications for Nursing: Identifying potential participants from specialized populations represents a major issue for clinicians and researchers in nursing and other health-related disciplines. Strategies exist to facilitate the process.

Key Points . . .

➤ More research in populations of varying cultural backgrounds is needed as the U.S. population diversifies.

➤ Culturally informed and sensitive methods are needed to identify potential participants from specialized minority populations.

➤ Developing a comprehensive sampling frame prior to sampling strengthens the research design.

➤ Developing a comprehensive sampling frame for a specialized minority population requires multiple sources, with heavy emphasis on collaboration with local community groups to obtain membership lists and information from key informants.

C ancer is a leading cause of death among Asian Americans, but Asian women tend to underuse breast cancer screening services (American Cancer Society [ACS], 1997; National Institutes of Health, 1998; Schulmeister & Lifsey, 1999; Yu, Seetoo, Tsai, & Sun, 1998). This article reports how multiple data sources were used to generate a list that could be used to recruit participants in a study of breast cancer screening among Asian women in Michigan. Survey statisticians call this list a sampling frame (i.e., a list of people from which a sample eventually will be drawn) (Salant & Dillman, 1994).

Methods

The investigators faced a great challenge in identifying Asian women because no complete list by age existed and the Asian population in Michigan is scattered. Four data sources were used to minimize coverage errors (Salant & Dillman, 1994) and

to develop an extensive sampling frame of eligible women that included their names, addresses, and telephone numbers.

Sample

The project was conducted in a southeastern Michigan county that has the second-largest Asian population in the state (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). Because the Asian population covers a great number of ethnic groups that are diverse in language, culture, history, religion, and demographic characteristics, the pilot study for which the list was needed focused on Chinese, the largest Asian group in the research site. Both U.S. citizens and noncitizens were included in the study because almost 70% of the Chinese population in the

Mei-yu Yu, PhD, is an associate research scientist and principal investigator of the Healthy Asian Americans Project (HAAP), and Amy D. Seetoo, AM, MLS, MBA, is the project director of the Healthy Chinese Americans Project of HAAP, both in the School of Nursing at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Mo Qu, MS, is a registered nurse at the University of Michigan Hospitals in Ann Arbor. This investigation was supported, in part, by the National Cancer Institute grant R03CA86594-01, University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center's Institutional Grant from the American Cancer Society, and University of Michigan Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program. (Submitted February 2001. Accepted for publication April 16, 2001.)