HPV Awareness and Prevention During the COVID-19 Pandemic Among Hispanic/Latinx Communities in the Bay Area

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Background
- The COVID-19 pandemic caused changes to clinic and hospital protocols. It is not known how these changes affected the medical care of Latinx patients.
- 99% of cervical cancer cases are caused by a previous HPV (human papilloma virus) infection, making cervical cancer the most preventable cancer.
- The incidence and mortality of cervical cancer in the Bay Area is higher in Hispanics than in non-Hispanic whites.
- Research shows this is due to decreased adherence to pap smear recommendations and lack of knowledge about HPV.
- The degree of knowledge about HPV in Latinx communities in the Bay Area is not known.
- Pap smears are the best available form of detecting cervical cancer.

OBJECTIVE:
- To assess how the COVID-19 pandemic affected access to cancer treatment and prevention services in the Latinx community in the Bay Area by surveying a sample of 200 Bay Area residents.

Community Partner
- This study is a partnership between the OCE at Stanford Medicine and Latinas Contra Cancer (LCC), a non-profit organization in San Jose, CA.
  - Mission: achieve health equity in the Latinx community in the Bay Area around issues of cancer.
  - Services provided at LCC include patient navigation, free wig and prosthesis boutique, health education, advocacy training, and support group.
- Responses were collected through a virtual survey using the RedCap platform.
- Eligibility: 1) 18 years old or older, 2) Reside in Santa Clara, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, or Alameda county, 3) Self-identify as Latinx/Hispanic.
- The survey included questions on demographics, health conditions, medical care needs during the pandemic, and problems accessing medical care during the pandemic.
- Survey intake was done through phone calls or in-person outreach at community events or clinics.
  - The client database from Latinas Contra Cancer was used as a recruitment tool.
  - All participants received a $10 gift card as compensation.
  - Qualitative data through provider interviews and focus groups are being collected. All data collection is still ongoing.
- Microsoft Excel was used to calculate percentages.

Methods
- Our research question was drive from the community partner based on needs already seen in the community. LCC reached out to the PI for help on performing a research project that could lead to changes at the county and state level.
  - Through this project, we learned that both academic institutions and non-profit community organizations have assets that benefit each other, which highlights the importance of research community partnerships.
- Our results highlight the importance of prioritizing primary care and cervical cancer education in the Latinx communities in the Bay Area.
- We recommend policy changes at the county and state level, particularly in the Medi-Cal and the Primary Care Access Program, that improve these services.

Lessons Learned / Recommendations
- This work was accomplished through funding from the Stanford Cancer Institute Community Partner Seed Grant. Community organization that allowed us to do outreach events at their sites for survey recruitment were Veggicution and Gardner Clinics.

The COVID-19 pandemic decreased access to cervical cancer prevention in the Latinx community, which widens already existing cancer inequities.

Acknowledgements

Results

Participant Demographics (n = 115)

- 89% female
- 92% foreign-born
- 67% completed high school or less
- 80% had an income of $50,000 or less

Outcomes
- All questions were asked if they applied since March 2020 to now.
  - Out all participants, 29% reported never having heard about HPV (Figure 1).
  - 21.7% were planning to get an HPV test; of those, 44% were postponed due to the pandemic.
  - Out of the participants that were 45 years old or younger (n=52), 5.8% were planning to get or needed an HPV vaccine.
  - Out of the participants that had children older than 9 years old (n=88), 14.8% were planning to vaccinate their children and 182% did not know if they were planning to vaccinate their children against HPV.
  - 44% of women who needed/planned a pap smear reported that they or their provider postponed their appointment (Figure 2).

References