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## **WMJ: Pilot study explores disparities in breast cancer screening among minority, immigrant and refugee women**

MILWAUKEE – Populations with cultural, educational and language barriers often have limited access to care, or other factors, such as lack of awareness, transportation issues, personal beliefs, financial concerns or work schedules, preclude them from seeking preventive care. According to a [report](#) published in *WMJ*, these were the findings from a two-year pilot project conducted by a community-academic partnership (CAP) in Milwaukee that sought to address disparities in breast cancer screening among minority, immigrant and refugee women.

The pilot was conducted as a partnership between the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Cancer Center, community and faith-based organizations, the Wisconsin Well Woman Program, and Columbia St. Mary's, a local health system that provided a mobile mammogram unit. During the 24-month study, the CAP conducted breast health education workshops once a month at a community location. Workshops included a 45-minute presentation about breast cancer risk, screening recommendations and prevention, and free clinical breast exams were also offered. Translators were available at each session along with language-appropriate educational materials. Navigators, community health workers and volunteers assisted with the sessions, provided snacks and coordinated transportation and childcare.

A total of 493 women attended one of the breast health education workshops at partnering organizations that serve primarily immigrants, refugees and racial minorities. Nearly 35 percent of participants did not have a primary care provider and almost 33 percent lacked medical insurance. A total of 374 women completed the workshop surveys, and 360 women were over age 40, making them eligible for mammograms. Among these women, 188 (113 insured [60%] and 75 uninsured [40%]) reported no prior mammogram in the past 2-5 years. After attending the workshop, mammogram uptake was 100 percent among the insured and 80 percent among the uninsured. The study staff coordinated screenings following the workshops either at the woman's primary care provider or through the free screenings for eligible women at the workshop locations.

"Our pilot initiative demonstrates the effectiveness of a culturally tailored community-academic partnership in facilitating the delivery of a comprehensive breast health education and screening program for culturally diverse women. Breast health education workshops, navigation and access to screening provided at trusted faith- or community-based organizations by culturally and linguistically relevant community health workers contributed to increased mammography uptake in both insured and uninsured women," said the study authors.

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The community- and faith-based organizations, in collaboration with academic faculty, have received independent funding to support continuation of the efforts started during the pilot project. The partners have been sustaining the effort through culturally tailored messaging about the importance of breast health knowledge and regular screenings in their organizations and in the community.

Published by the [Wisconsin Medical Society](#), *WMJ* is a peer-reviewed publication devoted to the interests of the medical profession and health care in the Midwest.

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