

For Immediate Release

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Simmons College Research Could Help Health Care Practitioners Reduce Breast Cancer Screening Disparities

BOSTON (June 26, 2017) – Understanding the cultural and socio-demographic factors that contribute to lower breast cancer screening rates among older Hispanic women could help social workers and medical professionals develop intervention strategies to reduce disparities, according to a study recently published by Simmons College professors.

The study is entitled “Older Hispanic Women and Breast Cancer Screening: Do Cultural Factors Matter?” and was published last month in the *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*. Dr. Tamara Cadet, an assistant professor at the Simmons School of Social Work, was the principal investigator for the study. She co-authored with Dr. Louanne Bakk from the Institute on Innovative Aging Policy and Practice at the University of Buffalo. Dr. Peter Maramaldi and Kathleen Stewart from Simmons College also contributed.

Today, breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Hispanic women. Forty-one percent of cancer diagnoses and 58 percent of breast cancer deaths occurred in women aged 65 and older. By 2050 Hispanics are expected to be the largest group of ethnic minority adults in the United States, and they face increased risk of cancer disparities partially because of their low participation in cancer screening.

“Although cancer screening disparities remain at the forefront of national research, few investigations focus on older Hispanic women and the cultural factors that may influence their decisions,” said Dr. Cadet. “Our findings could be used as a tool for social workers and health care providers to engage and assess patients through the lens of cultural relevance. Further, it is our hope that practitioners will use the data to develop new strategies to reduce cancer screening disparities, illness, and mortality rates among this population.”

According to the study, practitioners who recognize older women’s attitudes about present-versus future-time-orientation and their ability to cope with uncertainty are uniquely positioned to guide decision-making regarding their participation in cancer screening.

The research also found:

- Being married was a positive predictor for participating in breast cancer screening;
- Older, unmarried Hispanic women need to be the focus of targeted interventions to increase mammogram rates;
- Hispanics represent diverse populations from a range of countries that may influence

various factors including beliefs and behaviors, health status and their use of health services;

- Language status was not a significant factor that influenced participation in breast cancer screening.

The research was funded by the Hartford Doctoral Fellows in Geriatric Social Work Program and the Simmons School of Social Work. The study used data from the Health and Retirement Study, a longitudinal household study administered by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan and sponsored by the National Institute on Aging.

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