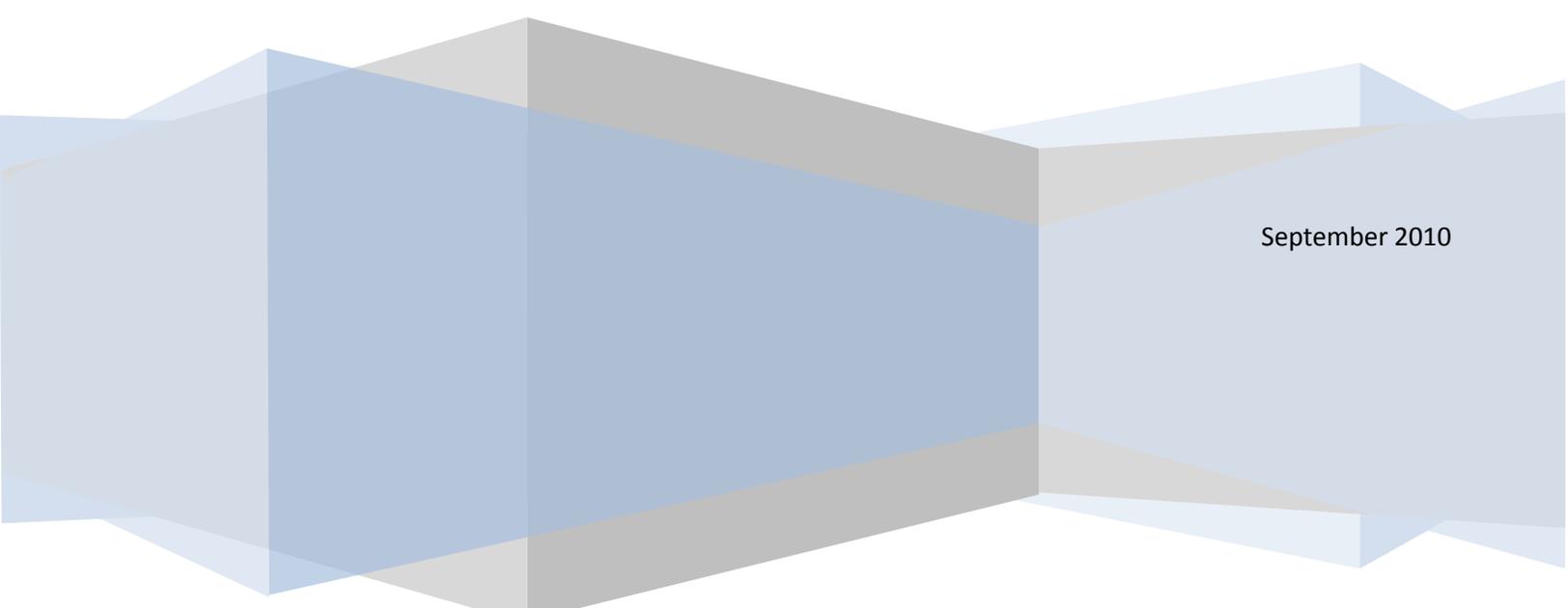


The Asian American Women Empowered: Participant Interviews

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The Asian American Women Empowered
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Summary of the Participant Interviews

As part of evaluation efforts in the Asian Women Empowered project, participant interviews were conducted, using a semi-structured interview schedule. The interviews were conducted by the Community Health Workers who spoke the language of the participants in person or by phone prior to the workshop. The evaluator compiled the completed interviews and summarized. A total of 15 women were interviewed. The ethnicity of the women included Vietnamese (7 or 47%), Karen (4 or 27%), Cambodian (3 or 20%), and one Burmese-Muslim. There were 2 women between the ages of 20-29, 5 women between the ages of 30-39, 3 women between the ages of 40-49, 3 women between the ages of 50-59, and 2 women were categorized as above the age of 60. The findings should be considered a partial picture of their health literacy and their experience with the health system.

Health Insurance

Six women (40%) said they had health insurance, 2 of whom reported that they had their insurance through the Care Source. There were a total of 8 women (53%) who reported not having any insurance. There was 1 person who did not respond to the question. Incidentally, 5 out of the 7 women who identified their ethnicity as Vietnamese reported having no health insurance while 2 out of the 3 women who identified as Karen reported having the Care Source insurance. Additionally, 2 of the 3 Cambodian women reported having health insurance.

Do you feel that you are in good general health?

The majority of the women (12 or 80%) reported being in good general health, while 2 women reported not being in good health, one stating her symptoms as body aches and tooth aches. Another woman rated her health as fair. Six of the 7 Vietnamese women reported being in good general health, which contrasts with the earlier trend that the majority of the Vietnamese women did not have health insurance. Additionally, all of the Cambodian women reported having good general health.

What do you do to stay healthy?

Of the 15 women, 10 reported using exercise to stay healthy. Two women reported either eating very little or not overeating as their ways to stay healthy. Moreover, 3 women reported visiting doctors for routine checkups as a way they stay healthy. The majority of women (10 or 67%) reported that they eat healthy foods, thoroughly cooked foods, and consume vegetables and fish as one of their ways to stay healthy.

What feelings and thoughts do you have about physicians, their care and their ability to relate to you personally?

There were women who reported positive feelings about their doctors—“they are nice and caring,” “they are kind and good at what they do,” “generally they are very good,” “doctors are very good if you have insurance,” “physicians follow up well with health,” “they follow up closely according to test results and age,” “they help care for my health well,” and “the doctors are friendly.” However, two women reported not going to the doctors very often because they don’t get sick. Another reported “waiting too long;” while another said “doctors and medical care were better in the past than they are now,” and “the medical staff is not as careful now.”

How do you feel about the tests or screening they prescribe?

Seven women reported that they normally do what their doctor orders, or they feel good about the screenings, noting that the tests are necessary to prevent diseases. Five women did not respond to this question. However, 3 reported feeling embarrassed, nervous, and shy about screenings and tests. One woman reported that the tests were very painful. Another woman reported that she was not sure about the tests, suggesting that she did not understand the question. Interestingly, 4 out of the 7 Vietnamese women didn’t respond to the question.

How do you feel about the expense of seeing a physician regularly?

Seven of the women reported that the expenses were too high and ridiculous. One woman reported that the costs keep her from going for screenings and tests. Two women described the prices as extraordinary and more than imagined. In addition, one woman reported having no knowledge of expenses because of her recent arrival, and 3 others reported feeling that the costs were fair or not requiring much out of pocket expense. Four women did not respond to the question.

What are your feelings and thoughts about hospitals, their ability to help you?

There were 3 women who reported negative feelings surrounding hospitals: for example, one woman had negative feelings for all hospital care; another reported that the emergency room is terrible and that the doctors are caring but the administrative staff is not. One woman reported that she does not give it much thought, but believes that it was better 25 years ago. One woman reported that she needs an interpreter and they don’t always provide one at the hospital. Likewise, another reported that she wishes she could communicate with the doctors in her language.

On the other hand, 8 of the women reported positive feelings about hospitals. Their responses included “hospitals’ care is very good,” “they are the places to take care of my health,” “they do their best,” “they are helpful,” and one woman reported that nothing can stop her from going. Another reported that though the hospitals are helpful, they offer more services than she needs. Lastly, one woman stated “they are very good, but only one problem is needing interpreter all the time. Sometimes they don’t request the interpreter [for their patients].”

What about the costs for obtaining these services?

Four of the women didn't respond to the question. Six of the women reported that the cost is too much. Meanwhile, 4 women were more specific with their responses, stating "they have overpriced costs and lack good, competent care," "no one helps with finances," and "the cost is going up very, very much from year to year." One woman reported that with Metro health, she only pays 50% of the cost, so it's not too bad. Lastly, one of the women stated that "the hospital cost is now increasing a lot from previous years."

If you do not have medical insurance, do you know what qualifies a person to receive publicly provided health insurance (Medicaid) and how to get it?

Seven of the women (48%) reported not having knowledge about obtaining Medicaid. Six of those women were Vietnamese. One woman reported that she believes she's qualified, but goes to the Metro Health. Another said that if she didn't have medical insurance, she would not know how to access or apply for Medicaid. Three of the women reported that they don't believe they qualify.

How serious of a health problem do you think cancer is?

Two women did not respond to the question. Twelve women (80%) reported that they take cancer very seriously. One woman reported doing regular screenings, and another reported that she knows a lot of people who have died from cancer. Lastly, one woman reported that she believed if cancer was found early, it could be cured.

Do you personally worry about developing cancer?

Nine (60%) of the 15 women did not respond to this question. Of those, 6 were Vietnamese. However, 5 of the women reported not worrying about developing cancer while the last one reported that she did worry.

Do you wish that you knew more about cancer?

Seven of the women (47%) reported "yes," noting they wish they knew more. Four others were more specific, stating, they "don't have time," they "worry about disease," or they "watch DVD's in Vietnamese and like to learn how to prevent cancers." Further, one stated that she wishes she had a way to "get information about cancer in Vietnamese." One person said they do not need to know anymore about cancer, and 3 did not respond to the question. All Karen women reported they wish they knew more about cancer.

What do you think about breast cancer and is breast cancer a personal concern of yours?

Three women reported that they weren't concerned about breast cancer. One woman said she was not worried because it did not run in her family. Another woman said that she did the mammograms before. Two women didn't respond to the question. However, the majority (12 or 80%) reported being concerned about breast cancer and had the following responses: "I believe it's related to your genes and is up to destiny," "I think about it a lot and do worry about getting it," "breast cancer can happen to

anyone,” “breast cancer rates can be reduced if women are conscious of their lifestyle,” “Americans are more prone to breast cancer” and that there needs to be early discovery of the cancer.

Do you think about self breast examinations and do you feel self breast examinations are helpful?

Nine of the women (60%) reported that they know about breast exams. Two of the women didn’t respond. Two women reported that they don’t know anything about self breast examinations. One woman reported that she hasn’t recently done a self exam, another woman stated that she isn’t confident she did it right.

Do you perform self breast examinations regularly? If not, why?

Five women responded by saying “yes.” Two women did not respond to the question. Three women do not perform them because they do not know about self breast exams and one woman does not do them because she does not want to. Lastly, two women reported performing the exams when they shower, another reported performing them once or twice a month and another said that she used to do them regularly but she is now too busy. Incidentally, 6 of the 7 Vietnamese women reported performing self breast exams.

What do you think about mammograms?

Five women responded positively including the following: “it’s a very good method to find breast cancer early,” “better than self exams and more accurate,” “they are important tests to detect breast cancer,” and “they help us prevent breast cancer.” Unfortunately, three women reported not knowing anything about mammograms. Another woman said that she doesn’t know about the usefulness of mammograms, while another stated that she doesn’t believe it is full proof. Lastly, another woman reported that she wasn’t aware of the benefits of mammograms. Two women reported pain associated with the mammogram and one reported embarrassment.

Have you ever had a mammogram and do you know of a facility where you can afford to get a mammogram?

Eight women (53%) said they have had a mammogram before. However, two of those women who have had mammograms can no longer afford it because they lost insurance. One woman reported that she does not need one because she’s under the age of 40 and no one has it in her family. Four women reported they haven’t had a mammogram and also do not know where to go for a mammogram. Two women did not respond to the question.

What do you know about cervical cancer and is cervical cancer something that you worry you might develop in the future?

Four women reported wanting to know more about cervical cancer. Others reported having some knowledge about it by saying: “heard about it and I worry a bit,” “cervical cancer is caused by a virus,” “there is the vaccine for young women,” “the cancer is very fatal,” “I’ve heard of it from the news and I

worry a little bit, but never really think about it,” and “we need to discover it early so we can cure it.” Two women knew someone with the condition.

Two women reported being worried about cervical cancer and 5 women reported not worrying about developing the illness or they don't think about it much. Three women did not respond to the question.

Do you get check-ups from a gynecologist?

The majority of the women (10 or 67%) reported “yes,” indicating that they get check-ups from the gynecologist. Two women mentioned that their visits were contingent upon whether or not they have health insurance. Three women responded that they have not gotten check-ups from a gynecologist. Two women did not respond. Incidentally, only one Vietnamese woman out of 7 reported not visiting the gynecologist.

Do your gynecological check-ups include Pap smear tests and breast examinations?

Ten women responded “yes,” one of whom specified “no” for the breast examination. All but one of the Vietnamese women responded yes to this question.

What do you think about Pap smear tests – have you ever had one and do you know of a facility where you can afford to get a Pap smear test?

Five women reported not knowing facilities to get a pap smear. An additional 2 women responded with “no” to the question. Four women said that they have specifically had a pap smear. The women also reported knowledge about cervical cancer, stating “pap smear tests are used to recognize cervical cancer,” “pap smears help prevent and detect cancer,” “it's very good to prevent cancer, but I also think that it's not 100% sure,” “we need to do more for ourselves, [we need to] know our body and practice good personal hygiene,” and “pap smear tests are most important to women.” Lastly, one woman used the words “shy” and “embarrassing” to describe pap smears.

Do you know of a facility where you can get a Pap smear test without paying a lot of money?

Two women reported yes, while the other 13 didn't respond at all.

What do you and your family think about regarding medical care – for example: feelings, about physicians, hospitals, medications, tests, cancer, etc?

The women had the following responses to question: “the wait time in the doctor's office is too long,” “the medical care given by physicans here is very good,” “my husband cannot get his refills on time because the drug store waits for his doctor's call,” “the time to wait between appointments is too long,” “the doctors we have are wonderful and caring, but the administrative people are rude and prejudice,” “we need to have more Asian/Vietnamese doctors who understand, sympathize and could stand up for us more,” “medical staff is not as caring as they used to be,” “prescreenings and screenings for all of these tests are vital to all women and will help reduce the cost of medical care for the nation in the future,” “they are very good,” and “sometimes the test is not required, but the physicians order all those

tests.” Two women reported positive feelings towards medical care and one reported she wished to get different free services, such as dental visits. Additionally, two women stated that they did not go to the doctor very often; one said she makes preventative efforts to reduce her risks, and that with possible profit from the medical industry, she doesn’t trust that everything being done is for the good and best interest of the patient. Two women did not respond.

Notable Points

1. More than half of the women reported not having health insurance.
2. The participants felt that in general they were healthy and that they knew how to stay healthy—eating healthy food and doing exercise.
3. In general they had favorable feelings about their own physicians, but they were overwhelmed with medical costs in the U.S. health system.
4. The participants’ feeling about the hospital care was mixed: while they admitted that medical care was very good, they thought the system itself is not so friendly to them. For example, one woman noted that the hospital failed to provide a translator for the appointment with her physician.
5. Some women tended to feel ambivalent about their own knowledge of breast and cervical cancer prevention, including breast self-exams and Pap smears. Especially, some women expressed their embarrassment about receiving exams.