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Improving cancer screening among lesbians over 50: results of a pilot study.

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PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: To explore the impact of two one-hour lesbian-specific educational interventions by a lesbian physician on the cancer screening behaviors of lesbians. **DESIGN:** A pilot pre- and post-test intervention study. **SETTING:** Two lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered senior organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area (one urban, one suburban). **SAMPLE:** 36 participants aged 50-81 (meanX = 60.2, SD = 6.48). The majority were Caucasian (86%), single (61%), living in urban areas (67%), employed (56%), and educated beyond high school (meanX = 15.47 years, SD = 2.90, range 9-21). Eleven percent (n = 4) did not have any health insurance and were not on Medicaid or Medicare. **METHODS:** A lesbian physician led a one-hour, didactic, lesbian-specific educational program on cancer screening, including a review of current research findings with regard to lesbians' risk for cancer and 45 minutes of information on recommended cancer screening, followed by a 15-minute question-and-answer period. Participants completed a pre- and postintervention survey. **FINDINGS:** Follow-up data were available for 22 women. Of the six women (27%) who had not focused their attention on breast screening behaviors for two years or more, one-third had obtained mammograms and half began performing monthly breast self-examinations. Of the four women (18%) who had not undergone a pelvic examination for three years or more, one obtained a pelvic examination. The women reported no changes in colorectal cancer screening behaviors. **CONCLUSIONS:** Some of these difficult-to-reach women changed their behavior in a very short period of time, supporting the need for a larger study to confirm these findings. **IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING:** A need exists to develop appropriate interventions for the underserved population of lesbians older than 50.

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