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Breast and colorectal cancer risk communication approaches with low-income African-American and Hispanic women: implications for healthcare providers.

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BACKGROUND: Information on breast and colorectal cancer risk factors is widely available to women and the physicians who provide their healthcare; however, many women are unable to identify the major risk factors, continue to misperceive their personal risk of developing these cancers, and do not engage in routine early detection. **METHODS:** Qualitative methods were used to investigate breast and colorectal cancer risk knowledge, perceptions, behaviors, and risk communication formats with low-income African-American and Hispanic study participants in Harlem, NY, aged 40-60 years. **RESULTS:** Focus group results indicated strong participant interest in strategies necessary to understand and reduce the risk of developing breast and colorectal cancers. Preferred risk communication tools presented information about family history and personal risk in graphic and quantitative formats. **CONCLUSIONS:** Healthcare professionals who serve low-income African-American and Hispanic female populations should deliver information to them about the personal risk of developing targeted cancers and ways to reduce this risk in formats that are meaningful and effectively address the special needs of these populations.