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ScreenABLE: Breast Cancer Screening among Women with Disabilities from Community Identified Challenges to Community-Based Programs

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What Is the Purpose of this Study?

- To describe a trajectory of a long-term community-academic partnership aimed at understanding and addressing breast cancer screening disparities among women with disabilities, from collaborative qualitative research through community-based programming.

What Is the Problem?

- Women with disabilities are an unrecognized cancer disparities population who experience well-documented barriers to breast cancer screening. There is a critical need for targeted, community-directed programming to address these disparities.

What Are the Findings?

- Women with disabilities identified provider and patient-side barriers to breast cancer screening, including a lack of provider knowledge and respect for disability, lack of accessibility, history of stigma and mistreatment within the health care setting, and treatment fatigue.
- Collaborative teams of graduate students and cancer survivors with disabilities created the short film “ScreenABLE” to educate providers and community members about physical and attitudinal barriers to cancer screening.
- Community, academic, and clinical partners collaborated to create ScreenABLE Saturday, a wellness fair for women with disabilities, the centerpiece of which was access to accessible mammograms. ScreenABLE Saturday programming was developed to directly address community-identified barriers to breast cancer screening.

Who Should Care Most?

- Women with disabilities should understand their rights to accessible, disability-competent breast cancer screening.
- Providers of breast cancer screening services must understand how to provide accessible, disability-competent screening services.
- Providers must understand the impact that physical and attitudinal barriers have not just on women with disabilities experiences in the moment, but also their willingness to seek screening over time.
- Researchers should find creative ways to communicate their research findings to stakeholders so as to promote opportunities for action.

Recommendations for Action

- Breast cancer screening facilities and providers must meet or exceed federal accessibility laws.

- Breast cancer screening professionals must be trained in disability competence as a part of their basic training and during continuing education.
- Women with disabilities and providers of cancer screening services should be encouraged to work together to figure out how to create the best screening experiences for women with disabilities while maintaining the quality of the images.
- Researchers should build collaborations with disability communities and providers of clinical services to promote evidence-informed provider and patient education as well as the development of community-based programming to address the unmet needs of the disability community.
- Researchers should partner with members of the disability community to further understand and address the breast cancer screening (and ultimately treatment and survivorship) needs of women with disabilities.