

Article for Radiation Protection

Supporting All Women to Receive Quality Mammography Screenings

Women with intellectual disabilities (ID) have the same risk for breast cancer as all women; yet they have limited knowledge about breast cancer and get screened less often. An intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills.

Over 400 women with intellectual disabilities (ID) across N.C. have been learning about the importance of breast cancer screening while taking the **Women Be Healthy (WBH) course**. This course teaches women with ID, in a developmentally appropriate way, about breast health and screening. Topics include the importance of breast cancer screening, what to expect during screening, how to relax during exams, and how to report their symptoms and ask questions of health care providers.

An essential element of the WBH course is to introduce women with ID to a mammogram by visiting a mammography site in their community. During this visit, women have the opportunity to see the actual screening equipment and ask the technologist questions. This educational field trip allows women to know what to expect during the mammogram experience and to help decrease their anxiety about the test. Thank you to the many N.C. certified mammography sites that have opened their doors and welcomed **Women Be Healthy** students to visit and learn about mammography screening.

The UNC-CH School of Social Work, NC Office on Disability and Health, and Brandeis University are currently conducting a three-year research study to evaluate the impact of the **Women Be Healthy** course on the women's knowledge and screening behaviors. Preliminary results indicate that before taking the class, women with ID had limited knowledge of breast cancer and related screenings. The women who took the **Women Be Healthy** course showed improvements in their knowledge of breast health and breast cancer screening.

For more information about the **Women Be Healthy** course, resources or research study please contact:

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You can also learn more about **Women Be Healthy** by visiting:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/womenbehealthy and the research study website:

Website: <http://lurie.brandeis.edu/women/index.html>