Cancer screening knowledge changes: results from a randomized control trial of women with developmental disabilities

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Abstract: Women with developmental disabilities are much less likely than nondisabled women to receive cervical and breast cancer screening according to clinical guidelines. One barrier to receipt of screenings is a lack of knowledge about preventive screenings. Method: To address this gap, we used a randomized control trial (n=175 women) to test Women Be Healthy, an intervention designed to promote cervical and breast cancer screening for women with developmental disabilities. Women assigned to the experimental group participated in weekly health education program for eight weeks. Women assigned to the control group participated in their regular vocational training or educational activities. Results: Unadjusted findings indicated modest gains for both groups in knowledge related to cervical and breast cancer screening. Regression results indicated statistically significant, but modest knowledge gains for the experimental group related to breast cancer screening. Implications: These findings indicate that women with developmental disabilities can benefit from a targeted health promotion intervention to increase their knowledge. The Women Be Healthy curriculum is promising, but needs to better address cervical cancer.