Editorial

Health Literacy and Breast Cancer Communication

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Breast cancer prevention and control efforts serve as priorities in Iran, as breast cancer is the common leading cause of death among women in this country. It seems the effective communication can play important role in increasing the breast cancer screening. On the other hand, health literacy is increasingly recognized as a critical factor affecting communication across the continuum of breast cancer screening behavior. A goal outlined in "Healthy People 2020" calls for improving health literacy by the use of health communication [1, 2]. Health literacy is the capacity to obtain, process, and understand breast cancer information and services needed to make appropriate health care decisions [3].

Women with poor health literacy have a complex set of problems with written and oral communication that may adversely affect their understanding of breast cancer screening and of the symptoms of breast cancer at the early stages of diagnosis [4]. In addition, these barriers destroy communication and discussion about the risks and benefits of prevention and treatment options, as well as the women's understanding of informed consent for routine procedures and clinical trials. Therefore, more research is required to identify successful methods for educating and communicating with women who have limited and low health literacy. Individuals with low health literacy may be limited in their ability to access and navigate the breast cancer care system, make appropriate health decisions, and practice on health care information. Understanding the factors that contribute to miscommunication is important in solving the difficulties arisen by low health literacy.

The research has shown [4] that inadequate health literacy skills are common, and women's insufficient and inaccurate health knowledge, poor numeracy skills, and impaired ability to adapt new information and concepts often interfere with the their ability to

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communication with the health care providers about breast cancer screening and treatment. Then it is necessary to apply practical communication techniques because they can help bridge the breast cancer communication gap. In conclusion, applying health communication techniques to facilitate accessibility, understanding, assessment and utilize of breast cancer screening information and services among underserved populations should serve as national priorities. Hence, better communication approaches are needed to enhance utilization. These efforts are of public health significance and assist in promoting uptake of breast cancer screening and early detection of breast cancer.

References

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