

Abstract Form

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Title of abstract: Increasing cervical screening awareness amongst refugees through peer-education and a localised media campaign

Background:

There is evidence of higher rates of cervical cancer in women from developing and war affected countries, due to lack of national screening programs and low awareness of preventative health measures in their country of origin. Recent qualitative research indicates that there is very little knowledge about cervical cancer and the importance of cervical screening amongst this priority population.

Aims:

The aim of the project was to increase cervical screening awareness and participation rates for women aged 25 to 74 years from refugee communities in western and south western Sydney regions. This project specifically targeted women from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Myanmar. Women from these communities were consulted throughout the project in order to identify any cultural barriers which prevent women from having the Cervical Screening Test.

Method:

The methodology for this project included a combination of peer-led education and a local media campaign.

Family Planning NSW worked with existing bilingual community educators in western and south western Sydney to develop a two-hour community education session and educational resources on the changes to the National Cervical Screening Program. Bilingual community educators were trained to deliver education sessions to women within their community.

A local media campaign was also launched to increase awareness of cervical screening. The media campaign comprised in-language written information and

videos. The modalities used for the media campaign included community radio and social media.

Results:

In-language pre and post surveys were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the education sessions and the results will be presented at the conference.

Participation in cervical screening pre/post completion of the education will be measured in two ways; using post-code data from the National Cancer Screening Register and using participation at the Fairfield FPNSW clinic.

Implications that impact on your project:

There was a low representation of younger women and greater representation of participants from Arabic speaking communities (Syria and Iraq) than expected. The project was further expanded to include a social media campaign in order to extend the reach of the project and to drive engagement with younger women.