



NYSCC Member Success Story: Immigrant Health Initiative

2009-2010, Vassar Brothers Medical Center/HealthQuest through funding from the Community Health Foundations and the United Way implemented the Immigrant Health Initiative. The objective of this initiative was to examine the healthcare seeking behavior and barriers to healthcare access among recent immigrants in the New York Hudson Valley region.

A survey was developed and administered via individual interviews with immigrants residing in the US less than ten years. Subjects were recruited from both rural and urban environments (n=290). This study found a relatively younger population of recent immigrants with overall low rates of cancer diagnoses and chronic disease. Only 12% of the subjects had health insurance, however, higher rates of breast cancer screening were observed than for native born residents (80% vs. 67.5%).

In multivariate analysis, female gender is one of the strongest predictors of engagement in the healthcare system for recent immigrants. Women were more likely to be insured, visit a doctor and participate in some preventive health care. Duration of residence was a determinant of healthcare engagement; language was a predictor of health insurance and involvement in preventive health care. Survey data indicate that awareness of screening services is achieved by word of mouth more than any other means of communication/advertising.

Women's health is a critical avenue to healthcare involvement for recent immigrants and may facilitate engaging entire family units. An ongoing need exists to facilitate cancer screening for uninsured patients with limited English proficiency. Phase two of this initiative will involve establishment of a navigator and health promoter program dedicated to extending preventive health and screening services to the recent immigrant population.