

Breast Cancer Prevention in Smiths Station, AL: Community Assessment Project

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**Abstract**

A crucial aspect of nursing involves reaching out into the community to promote and maintain healthy lifestyles of all members. This ideal can be particularly important in areas where healthcare resources are low or inadequate. Smiths Station, Alabama is a small rural town where there is a lack of resources and knowledge regarding breast cancer. Through community outreach and an intervention, it is possible to educate the women of Smiths Station on the importance of breast cancer screenings and increase awareness and knowledge on breast cancer. To implement this intervention effectively, a windshield survey, interview, and internet search were completed. By gathering information on the community in various ways, the group was able to educate the women of Smiths Station based on their specific needs.

*Keywords:* intervention, breast cancer, awareness, screening

### Breast Cancer Prevention in Smiths Station, AL: Community Assessment Project

Smiths Station is a small city located on the eastern border of Alabama in Lee County. Nearby cities include Phenix City, AL and Columbus, GA. The city is 6.59 square miles with 747 persons per square mile. The estimated population of Smiths Station is 5,176. The population is predominantly white and over half of the residents of Smiths Station are females (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Currently, there is only one doctor's office in Smiths Station and the closest hospital is in Phenix City, which is 9 minutes away. Because of the lack of healthcare resources in the area, citizens of Smiths Station may not be able to easily receive the care and checkups that they need. The Healthy People 2020 objective and focus of this CAP Project is to increase the number of women between the ages of 30-70 who get screened for breast cancer (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2015). This objective is applicable to the women of Smiths Station because the city lacks women's healthcare facilities and cancer screening resources. The purpose of this paper is to educate the women of Smiths Station on the importance of routine breast cancer screening, identifying risk factors for breast cancer, and utilizing the available healthcare in the community.

### **Community Assessment**

Smiths Station has an estimated population of 5,176 people. The population is 80.3% white, 15.9% African American, 0.7% American Indian, 0.5% Asian, 2% biracial, and 2% Hispanic or Latino. The median age of the population is 39.3 years. The median household income of Smiths Station residents is \$44,277 and 12.6% of the population is below the poverty line. Around 21% of residents 18 and older have graduated high school, and 14% have received a Bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Compared to the Alabama

State average, Smiths Station has a significantly low unemployment percentage and 18.5% of residents under 65 are uninsured (United States Census Bureau, 2014; Advameg, Inc., 2015). Smiths Station does not have its own hospital, but there are several nearby hospitals including Phenix City Healthcare, Russell County Home Care, Wiregrass Hospice, Parkwood Healthcare Facility, Phenix City Dialysis, Vistacare of Alabama and DCI Phenix City. All of these locations are within 10 miles of Smiths Station (Advameg, Inc., 2015). The only primary care facility in Smiths Station is Smiths Health Care Center. This center specializes in family practice and general practice as well as pediatric care. However, this facility cannot offer cancer-focused care, therefore the residents of Smiths Station may have to travel in order to receive certain screenings and tests.

### **Windshield Survey**

Smiths Station is the epitome of a small town with only one main road and welcoming residents. The town consists of middle-aged residents who are predominantly white. The forms of transportation used by the residents are driving, walking, and riding bicycles. The only buses in Smiths Station are church and school buses. The residents of Smiths Station have many chain grocery stores such as Wal-Mart and Dollar General, as well as local food stores such as Terry's Groceries and Rainbow foods. One of the most popular local restaurants is Del Ranch Restaurant, which serves as a restaurant and a bar for the residents in the community. Along the outskirts of the downtown area are homes of the residents in Smiths Station. The homes are generally older and run down one-story houses or trailers with moderate decay. Satellite dishes and air conditioning units were evident in the homes as they were placed exteriorly on the houses. The houses were predominately rural with natural boundaries. In the areas of greater

poverty, the houses were closer together with unkempt yards and possessions and trash strewn about the yard. During the windshield survey, it was noted that this is not a developing community and it consists of low to middle class residents. Four schools are located in Smiths Station including an elementary, middle and high school. The town also has day cares and senior centers for the younger and older residents of the area. Sports are very important to the Smiths Station culture and several sports complexes and recreation fields are located in the area. The recreation aspect of the town includes softball, baseball, football and track and field parks. There are also public spaces for members of the community to picnic. Churches in Smiths Station are predominately Baptist, but there are also other denominations present. The town of Smiths Station has many great qualities that help them succeed as a community, but their lack of access to health care is concerning. There is one primary health care facility in the area, Smith's Health Care Center, and the nearest hospital is ten minutes away in Phenix City. With this being the only access health clinic available in the area, there arises concern about the health education available to Smiths Station. The lack of resources available to the residents of the community decreases their likelihood to be screened for life-threatening illnesses such as breast cancer.

### **Interview**

To gather information regarding the health of Smiths Station's general population, an interview was conducted with the office manager at the Smiths Health Care Center. The source works closely with the healthcare providers in the clinic, and the strengths of the community were identified as its small town attributes. The town is very close knit, therefore the patients that present at the clinic are known personally by the staff and healthcare providers. Athletics are considered the chief strength quality of the community. Sports are considered a priority

source of activity and entertainment; therefore these frequent activities promote an active lifestyle. It is felt that there is no need for improvement in the population, with Smiths Health Care Center being the only physician's office in town. Although it is the only office in town, the staff considers it satisfactory for such a small community. During the interview, it was noticed that there were no patients present at 10:30am on a weekday. Despite the comfort with the healthcare offered, the community has expressed some desires for an acute care center in town such as an urgent care and it is thought that it would be a beneficial addition for the town (Office Manager, personal communication, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The interview was then directed toward the target concern of breast cancer. No concerns were expressed in regards to the matter. When asked about the Healthy People 2020 goal of increasing the proportion of adults who were counseled by their providers about mammograms, there was not much expressed concern as mammograms are regularly encouraged by the clinic . A barrier to achieving this goal is considered to be the low income and uninsured population without access to education or screening; however, there was no expressed concern with reaching this population. Since Smiths Health Center is the only primary care center in town, the office manager has seen the majority of the population over time and recognizes their overall health and specific concerns related to breast cancer screenings in the area. When explaining the planned local intervention, the recommended place to reach the target population about breast cancer screening was after church services on a Wednesday night or a Sunday morning or a frequently visited grocery store (Office Manager, personal communication, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

### **Healthy People 2020**

In Smiths Station, the most prevalent issues in the community are low health literacy and

the limited access to appropriate health care. To address these barriers, the focus of primary prevention includes the Healthy People 2020 objective regarding the need to increase the proportion of women who receive a breast cancer screening. According to Healthy People 2020, 73.7 percent of females ages 50 to 74 years old received a breast cancer screening nationally (HHS, 2015). In the state of Alabama, only 46.3% of the women were receiving screening in 2008. A more recent study done in 2012 demonstrates an increase to 85.3%. Between 2001 and 2011, the female breast cancer death rate declined 17.2% from 26.1 to 21.6 per 100,000 populations and varied by race and ethnicity (HHS, 2015). To continue this decline in deaths related to breast cancer, the importance of the awareness of screenings needs to be increased in rural towns such as Smiths Station. According to the local doctors office, Smiths Healthcare Center, 500 women received breast cancer screenings within the past year (Office Manager, personal communication, May 29th, 2015). In a town of 5,000 this number indicates the need to enhance the knowledge of the importance of screening. Due to the lack of access of care and the knowledge deficit, the Healthy People 2020 objective permits applicable intervention to Smiths Station. This community could benefit the most from interventions that focus on the community's health literacy and providing information on locations that offer screenings. Therefore, enforcing the need for breast cancer screening by describing those who are at risk, expressing appropriate ages for screening, and giving instructions on how to perform self-breast examinations are critical in helping Smiths Station meet this Healthy People 2020 objective (HHS, 2015).

### **Community Health Oriented Diagnosis**

Like any community, the town of Smiths Station faces several health issues. Some of the

main health concerns in the town include obesity, smoking and diabetes. Although these problems are not the focus of the project, smoking and obesity may increase the risk for developing breast cancer. Therefore, it is important for women with such health problems to be aware of the risk factors. Smiths Station is at risk for deficient community health related to insufficient knowledge as evidenced by inadequate health care resources, lack of community health outreach and low rate of breast cancer screenings.

### **Literature Review**

Research has been conducted over the past several years to discover successful interventions in increasing the amount of breast cancer screenings among a variety of populations. Clinics and organizations that cater to the low income, racial/ ethical minority, disabled or rural populations play a large part in accessing women in such populations that typically have lower screening rates. Therefore there is an increased need for intervention that promotes regular screenings in these areas. Due to the lack of access of health care related to cost and availability in rural areas such as Smiths Station, community-based interventions are ideal. During a study, a seven member Advisory Committee that included members of multiple cancer societies conducted research on the effectiveness of different special events for improving awareness and rates of breast cancer screening. The special events included health fairs, parties, plays, cultural events, and special days. On-site screening was provided at the different sites, as well as one-on-one or group education and administration of educational materials. The goals aimed to be met at the sites consisted of increasing cancer-screening awareness and accessing vulnerable populations such as the underserved or uninsured populations. Hospitals, clinics, or CBOs were most commonly the location of the special events, and all of the screening services



provided were free of cost. When patients were referred for screening instead, it was to local health departments, medical practices or specific facilities, or individual nurse practitioners. On average, the special events resulted in 34.7 screenings per event either onsite or through referral, with some reaching as many as 95 women. This study did not provide conclusive results on the long-term effectiveness of special events for breast cancer screening; however, it did document practices and interventions that can continue to be used for further investigation (Escoffery et al., 2014). Another intervention noticed nation wide is the designation of the pink ribbon as the symbol of breast cancer awareness. The pink ribbon symbolizes empathy, strength, hope, responsibility, and the permission to discuss breast cancer. The goal of Harvey and Strahilevitz during this study was to view why the pink ribbon was selected and the positive impact it has had on the awareness of breast cancer (2014). As previously stated, the ribbon can signify different things to different people. It has become a powerful, versatile tool used in marketing to raise awareness through a multitude of products such as jewelry, cosmetics, and clothing. Since the 1970s when breast cancer awareness began, screening utilization and mammography has increased remarkably. The percentage of women aged 40 years and older who reported being screened within the past 2 years increased to 70% in the year 2000 as reported by the American Cancer Society. The pink ribbon and its exposure were likely to have an impact on the increased awareness, as it found its place on multiple items given away and on the shelves according to Harvey and Strahilevitz (2009). It was also found that not only has the ribbon directly raised awareness, but it has also assisted in the fundraising that goes directly towards research and other awareness programs. Although it cannot be proven that the pink ribbon is solely responsible for an increased awareness of breast cancer, it is still considered to be vastly known and serve as a

helpful reminder of the need for regular screening (Harvey & Strahilevitz, 2009).

### **Community Intervention**

The community intervention was implemented at Terry's Grocery Store, one of the few grocery stores in Smiths Station. In preparation for the intervention, the group created an informational poster to display, pamphlets to hand out, and a questionnaire. The poster contained general information about breast cancer risk factors as well as the purpose of mammograms and self-breast exams. The pamphlets included more detailed information on breast cancer screening, the importance of early detection, how to do a self-breast exam, when to get screened, and phone numbers of organizations in the area that offer mammograms. Informing women about where to get screened for breast cancer is particularly important because it provides the women with all the information they need to make an appointment for a mammogram, which coincides with the Healthy People 2020 goal of this intervention. One main feature of the intervention included emphasizing the importance of early detection and regular screenings. Along with providing information, a questionnaire was used to gather information on the health status of women in Smiths Station. The women were asked if they had ever been screened for breast cancer, when their last screening was, and if they planned on getting screened in the future. The information gathered through the questionnaire provided information about the health efficacy of Smiths Station and informed the participants on the need for screening. The results of the questionnaire showed that although some women did regularly get screened for breast cancer, many of the women of Smiths Station were not up to date on their mammograms. This finding is important because the intervention at Smiths Station was effective in reaching the target population. By informing and educating some of the women in Smiths Station, this

intervention raised awareness and empowered the women of the area with the knowledge needed to detect breast cancer early on.

### **Evaluation of Project and Feedback**

Although not all women that were approached wanted to participate in the survey and take a pamphlet, the ones who did were very attentive to the information offered. A total of fifteen women participated in the intervention and were eager for the information provided. Although it was a successful intervention, in hindsight some things should have been changed. For one, many of the places that were ideal for the intervention did not work out, but these venues would have been better for reaching the target population. Terry's Grocery Store was busy, but many of the customers were teenagers and men; neither of which were part of the target population. The original plan to do the intervention after a women's bible study group would probably have given the study more information about the population and allowed the intervention to reach more women. It is difficult to reach out to the population of Smiths Station because it is a small, rural community and there is no great central area to reach the women of the town. For future interventions it is recommended to go to multiple venues on multiple days in order to gather as much information on the population and teach a greater amount of women about breast cancer and the importance of screening. Another idea for the next intervention would be to provide some sort of food or candy for participants, which might give them some incentive to come learn about breast cancer screening and take a pamphlet. Many of the women who received pamphlets gave positive feedback and believed that the information was very useful. Those who participated in the questionnaire also showed signs of increased knowledge and interest in breast cancer screenings. It also assisted with reminding women about being up-

to-date on their mammograms. The survey was effective in gathering information for the study as well as informing the participants on their health status related to breast cancer screenings. This community was receptive and would definitely benefit from more educational interventions. Therefore, future groups should change the venue of the intervention in order to reach out and provide education to more women of Smiths Station.

### **Conclusion**

Smiths Station, located in a rural Alabama, is a community with that small town feel. It is a tight-knit community that is focused on families and connectedness. The intervention to educate women about the importance of breast cancer screening by handing out pamphlets and taking a survey was appropriate and successful for this community. Although not all of the women were reached, the fact that everyone knows everyone in this small town is important, because the women who were reached can spread the new information learned to their friends and family. Primary prevention measures were most appropriate for achieving the Healthy People 2020 objective to increase the proportion of women who receive a breast cancer screening based on the most recent guidelines between the ages of 30 to 70. Overall this project proved to be successful in achieving the Healthy People 2020 objective and appeared to benefit the target population.

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## Appendix A

### Community Statistics

Category	Description of community characteristics	Resource
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Overview of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· History, type (urban, suburban, rural) Rural</li><li>· Description (location, topography, size) -located in the eastern border of Alabama near Phenix City, AL &amp; Columbus, GA -6.59 square miles</li><li>· Leading industries, occupations -leading industries are help services, religious organizations, and child day care services</li><li>· Governmental Structure (Mayor/city council) -Mayor</li></ul>	<a href="http://livability.com/al/smiths-station">http://livability.com/al/smiths-station</a>
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Population profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Total population: 5,176 (2013 estimate)</li> <li>· Age distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Persons under 5 years: 5.9%</li> <li>-Persons under 18 years: 24.1%</li> <li>-Persons over 65 years: 13.1%</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Median age: 39.3 years</li> <li>· Sex distribution: 51.8% female, 48.2% male</li> <li>· Race/Ethnic composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-White: 80.3%</li> <li>-African American: 15.9%</li> <li>- American Indian &amp; Alaska Native: 0.7%</li> <li>-Asian: 0.5%</li> <li>-Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander: 0.0%</li> <li>-Two or more races: 2.0%</li> <li>-Hispanic or Latino: 2.8%</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Income <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Median household income: \$44,277</li> <li>-Persons below poverty line: 12.6%</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Persons under 65 years old with disabilities: 18.5%</li> <li>· Persons under 65 years old without insurance: 18.3%</li> </ul>	<p><i>State and County QuickFacts</i></p> <p><i>City-Data.com</i></p> <p><i>Realtor.com (</i>  <i>(United States</i>  <i>Census Bureau,</i>  <i>2014) (United</i>  <i>States Census</i>  <i>Bureau, 2014)</i>  <i>(United States</i>  <i>Census Bureau,</i>  <i>2014) (United</i>  <i>States Census</i>  <i>Bureau, 2014)</i>  <i>(United States</i>  <i>Census Bureau,</i>  <i>2014)) sourced</i>  <i>from the census</i></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Educational level:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-21% of residents 18 &amp; older have a high school degree</li><li>-14% of residents achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher</li></ul></li></ul>	United States Census Bureau ) <a href="http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/DIS010213/0171190,00">http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/DIS010213/0171190,00</a>
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Health indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Leading cause of death (<i>overall and in your target population</i>)</li> <li>· Leading causes of morbidity (incidence &amp; prevalence rates)</li> <li>· Healthy People 2020 objective– <i>is there information to compare your community to the goal?</i></li> <li>· No information on breast cancer prevalence in Smiths Station could be found</li> <li>· Adult diabetes rate: 9.4%</li> <li>· Adult obesity rate: 30.2%</li> <li>· Low income preschool obesity rate: 9.2%</li> </ul>	Could not find info on leading causes of death & morbidity
Community Health Facilities & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Health systems-acute care and emergency services</li> <li>-Smiths Health Care Center</li> <li>· Home health, long-term, rehabilitation, hospice, mental health, etc.</li> <li>-None in Smiths Station</li> <li>· Ambulatory, outpatient services</li> <li>-None in Smiths Station</li> <li>· Public health and social services</li> <li>-None in Smiths Station</li> </ul>	

	· Special health or volunteer services related to your target population or HP 2020 objective.	
Other information related to your target population and HP 2020 objective?		

## Appendix B

## Windshield Survey

Element	Description	Summary of findings
Housing	Age of homes? General condition? Signs of despair? Air conditioning evident?	Older run down, moderate decay, mostly trailer and one story homes, AC evident in homes, not a developing community, low to middle class.
Open space/Boundaries	Green space? Parks? Public or private open space? Are the boundaries natural or physical? Neighborhood identity?	Softball, baseball, and track and field parks, public spaces, neighborhood identity would be described as very rural with natural boundaries
“Commons”	Where do people “hang out”? Welcoming to visitors or territorial?	Del Ranch Restaurant is the local hang out place, Smiths Station community is very involved in sports and is considered one of their biggest attributes to their town.

		Residents are welcoming to visitors
Transportation	How do people get around? Walk or car or public transportation? Is there a major highway?	Transportation by cars, bikes, church buses, and walking. Located off of 280 and the main road is Lee Road
Service Centers	Do you see social agencies, recreation centers, or signs of activity around schools?	Nearest social agency and rec center are in Phenix City. Six schools are located in Smiths Station including elementary, middle and high schools (part of Lee County school system) day care, and senior centers
Stores	Where do people shop? Shopping centers? Neighborhood stores? How do they get there?	Walmart, Dollar General, Terry's Groceries, Rainbow Foods, gas stations. Transportation by bikes, walking, and cars.
Street people	Who do you see on the street? Do you see anyone you wouldn't	A lot of middle aged residents, nothing really unexpected.

	expect? Along with people, are there any animals? Are dogs on leashes? Any stray cats or other animals?	Dogs chained up in yards, stray cats.
Race/ethnicity	Which races are represented? Is the area integrated? Are there evidences of ethnicity – food stores, churches, private schools?	Predominately white population, handful of African Americans was seen. No evidence of private schools, churches, or food stores based on ethnicities besides a Mexican Restaurant.
Religion	Is there evidence of heterogeneity or homogeneity based on the churches?	Homogeneity based churches (Baptist)
Health & morbidity	Any evidence of acute or chronic illness? How far to nearest hospital or clinic?	Acute illness. 9 min to the nearest hospital in Phenix City
Politics	Any political campaign posters/signs? Any evidence of predominant party affiliation?	No political signs or evidence of predominant affiliation

Media	Any outdoor television antennas or satellite dishes? Is there a local newspaper?	Mostly satellite dishes, a few outdoor television antennas.  Online news for Smiths Station, they receive Phenix City's newspaper
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## Appendix C

## Interview

Potential Questions	Summary of answers
What is your role in the community?	Office manager at Smiths Healthcare Center
What do you believe are some strengths of the community?	Small town. Everyone knows everyone. Athleticism / sports are very important in the community (active lifestyle)
Are there areas of improvements in the community?	Adequate: Smiths Healthcare Center is the only physician's office in town but feels that it's adequate for population.
What are the major concerns of community members?	Expressed desire for an acute care in town such as an urgent care.
Do you believe there is adequate access to health care?	Yes, there is only one office but it is felt to be adequate (there were no patients when we were in the office @ 1030am) & there is a hospital 12 minutes away.
Specific to... ( <i>your target</i>	"No"



<p><i>population</i>)...are there any special concerns related to health?</p>	
<p>We are focusing on the HP 2020 goal of...(identify your specific HP 2020 goal of interest). What are some community barriers and facilitators to reaching this goal in this community?</p>	<p>Mammograms are encouraged by the clinics.</p> <p>People without insurance are less likely to come in to the office at all to be education (barrier).</p> <p>Low income families (barrier to healthcare).</p>
<p>Is there anything else you would like to add related to the community and health?</p>	