Utilization of Cancer Genetic Services by Young Female Breast Cancer Survivors
Beth Anderson¹, MPH, Jenna McLosky⁴, MS, CGC, Elizabeth Wasilevich³ PhD, MPH, Sarah Lyon-Calvo¹ MA, MS
Debra Duquette¹, MS, CGC and Glenn Copeland³ MBA

INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer diagnosed at a young age is an indication of a higher risk for inherited cancer syndromes, such as hereditary breast and/or ovarian cancer syndrome (HBOC). According to the recently published National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Guidelines, women diagnosed with breast cancer prior to age 50 should be referred for further risk assessment, genetic counseling, and possible genetic testing [3].

The sampling frame included 500 women between the ages 18-49 who were diagnosed with breast cancer in the years 2006 or 2007 in the state of Michigan. The eligible population was selected from the Michigan Cancer Surveillance Program (MCSP) registry which has a mandate to collect data from local reporting facilities on all cases of cancer and other specified tumorous and precancerous diseases that occur in this state. Women who were known to be deceased were excluded. Prior to implementation, the Michigan Department of Community Health’s Institutional Review Board and the MCSP’s Scientific Advisory Board reviewed and approved the study.

METHODS

The selection and consent process

The selection process consisted of three steps based on an existing standard method used by MCSP (Figure 1). If the local reporting facility and diagnosing physician did not object to MCSP contacting the patient, the participant was mailed the survey with up to three attempts. The respondent was asked to sign an informed consent attached to the survey.

The self-administered paper-based survey contained questions on demographics, family history of breast and ovarian cancer, genetic testing and counseling, and facilitators and barriers to obtaining genetic services. Participants who returned a signed consent and survey were mailed a $10 gift card.

Survey Questions on Facilitators and Barriers
- Please tell us why you decided to go for cancer genetics services
- Please tell us what factors made it easier for you to go for cancer genetics services
- Please tell us why you have not had cancer genetics services

*Questions were closed-ended. Response options can be seen in Tables 1 and 2

Response frequencies were assessed for differences between groups defined by demographic characteristics, socioeconomic characteristics, and family history of cancer. Two-sided Pearson Chi-Square tests were used to determine significant differences between subpopulations; p-values of <0.05 were considered statistically significant.

REFERENCES
5. The Michigan Department of Community Health
6. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

RESULTS

Twelve women were determined to be ineligible for the study (five who were deceased and seven with medical contraindications). Surveys and consent documents were sent to the remaining 488 women in the sample. Response rate was 92.9% (n=359). The response rate from the black population (35.8%) was significantly lower than the response rate from the white population (64.0%) (p=0.001).

Respondents were primarily white (86.2%), employed for wages (56.1%) and had private insurance (75.4%). One-hundred and twenty respondents (42.2%) reported receiving cancer genetic services. Compared to those who did not receive cancer genetic services, the women who received services were of a younger age, higher education and more likely to have family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer.

The most frequently cited reasons for going to genetic services were ‘benefits for my family’s future’ (86.1%), followed by ‘wanted to know my future risk of cancer’ (50.8%) (Table 1).

The top factors for YBCS that made it easier were ‘medical insurance covered the visit’ (68.0%), ‘the clinic was close to home’ (40.2%) and ‘have available transportation’ (40.2%) (Table 1).

Importantly, 121 of the 122 women who received the cancer genetic services were told or recommended to go by a health care professional or family member. The majority were told by an oncologist (48.4%) or surgeon (19.7%), with OB/GYN (4.9%), genetic counselor (4.9%) or family member (4.9%) less frequently mentioned.

DISCUSSION

This is the first study that provides community-based information about barriers and facilitators to obtaining genetic services among YBCS. The role of a healthcare provider has been shown to be a strong facilitator for receiving cancer genetic services and was seen as the third most noted facilitator in this study. Approximately three-quarters of the Michigan YBCS who were told to go to cancer genetic services followed through with this recommendation. It was also seen as the top barrier with over half of the YBCS noting ‘no one recommended it’. A recent survey of primary care physicians showed that 87% were aware of BRCA genetic testing however, less than one-fifth were able to correctly identify low and high risk clinical scenarios[4].