


Volume 44, Number 2 2006

PRINT ISSN: 0363-0242
ELECTRONIC ISSN: 1541-0331

Women & Health™



Complete Contents on Back Cover

 **HMP** Published by The Haworth Medical Press®

Indexed in
MEDLINE®

Preventive Health Measures for Lesbian and Bisexual Women

Women & Health
Volume 44, Number 2

CONTENTS

Preface xxiii

Preventive Health Behaviors Among Lesbian and Bisexually
Identified Women 1

Brooke E. Wells, MA

David S. Bimbi, PhD candidate

Diane Tider, MPH

Jason Van Ora, MA

Jeffrey T. Parsons, PhD

The current research aimed to better understand the preventive health behaviors of lesbian and bisexually identified women. We recruited lesbian and bisexual women at a large-scale Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual (GLB) event in New York City. An ethnically diverse sample of 102 lesbian and 23 bisexually identified women who had sex with women from the New York City metropolitan area completed a quantitative survey. Lesbians, compared to bisexual women, were significantly older and significantly more likely to report being in partnered relationships. Lesbians were also more likely than bisexual women to report having performed recent breast self-examinations. Because of previously inconsistent findings and methodologies, further research is needed to determine the specific effects of lesbian or bisexual identity on preventive health behaviors.

KEYWORDS. Lesbian, bisexual, health behavior

Cancer Prevention and Screening Behaviors in Lesbians 15

Cecelia Gatson Grindel, PhD, RN, CMSRN, FAAN

Linda A. McGehee, PhD, RN

Carol A. Patsdaughter, PhD, RN

Susan J. Roberts, DNSc, RN, ANP

The incidence of cancer diagnosis has increased in the United States highlighting the need for astute cancer prevention and screening behaviors. Previous literature

has suggested that lesbians may not follow the American Cancer Society's (ACS) guidelines regarding prevention and screening for cancer due to disparity in access to care and increased use of alcohol and tobacco. The purpose of this study was to examine the cancer prevention and screening behaviors of lesbians using the ACS guidelines as the standards for comparison, and to determine factors that influence mammography screening.

A 102-item self-report survey was distributed to lesbians nationwide using various methods including snowballing sampling techniques. The sample included 1139 self-identified lesbians from 44 states.

In general, healthy lifestyle behaviors were followed. The majority of the women did not smoke, ate plenty of fruits and vegetables, ate protein sources low in fat and consumed alcohol at a moderate rate. However, safe sex practices were often not used by participants. Most women did have mammograms and Papanicolaou smears (PAP) as recommended; however, adherence to self-breast examination guidelines was not followed. Women who were older, had higher yearly incomes, did not smoke, performed regular self breast exams and had regular physical exams were most likely to have a mammogram.

Over half of the women met American Cancer Society guidelines for prevention and screening for breast and cervical cancer. However, strategies are needed to increase compliance with these guidelines in order to improve cancer health outcomes.

KEYWORDS. Cancer screening, health promotion, healthy lifestyles, lesbians

Sexual Minority Women's Interactions with Breast Cancer Providers

41

Ulrike Boehmer, PhD

Patricia Case, ScD

Good patient-physician relationships and communication lead to better patient health and more satisfied patients. So far, satisfaction of sexual minority (lesbian, bisexual or women who partner with women) cancer patient-physician interactions is unknown. This study describes sexual minorities' experiences with their treating physicians and which provider attitudes were perceived as positive or negative. We conducted separate individual interviews with 39 sexual minority women diagnosed with breast cancer. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and then analyzed from a Grounded Theory perspective. Participants' narratives indicated that satisfaction is connected with a certain style of patient-physician interactions rather than physician gender. Specific provider traits in the two domains of (1) inter-personal behaviors and (2) medical expertise and decision-making determined patient satisfaction. These findings suggest that physicians of either gender can develop the skills needed to improve quality of breast cancer care for sexual minority women.

KEYWORDS. Physician-patient relations, patient satisfaction, homosexuality, female, interviews, physician's practice patterns, decision making, sex factors

Community Support, Community Values: The Experiences
of Lesbians Diagnosed with Cancer

59

Christina Sinding, PhD
Pamela Grassau, PhD candidate
Lisa Barnoff, PhD

The study reported in this article was initiated in response to the paucity of literature focused on Canadian lesbians with cancer. The aims of the study were broadly defined: to increase understanding of Canadian lesbians' experiences with cancer and cancer care, and to suggest directions for change such that lesbians with cancer might be better supported by service providers and lesbian communities. The qualitative study, set in Ontario, Canada, employed a participatory action research model. Twenty-six lesbians were interviewed about their experiences of cancer and cancer care. This article reports research participants' narratives about lesbian community. Findings reveal the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that lesbian community unfolds in the lives of lesbians with cancer. While most participants experienced robust and competent community support, participants also reported instances of isolation and disconnection linked to fear of cancer, homophobia in the broader community, and patterns of exclusion within lesbian communities. As well, while lesbian community norms and values appeared to buffer the negative effects of treatment-related physical changes, such norms also manifested as prescriptions for lesbians with cancer. Findings affirmed the value of creating networks among lesbians with cancer within a context of increased accessibility to mainstream cancer services.

KEYWORDS. Lesbians, lesbian community, cancer, social support, community values

Psychosocial Responses to Treatment for Breast Cancer
Among Lesbian and Heterosexual Women

81

Patricia L. Arena, PhD
Charles S. Carver, PhD
Michael H. Antoni, PhD
Sharlene Weiss, PhD
Gail Ironson, MD, PhD
Ron E. Durán, PhD

This study compared the experiences of 39 self-identified lesbians and 39 heterosexual women who had recently been treated for breast cancer. They were matched by age, stage of disease, time since diagnosis, and ethnicity. Data were collected by a questionnaire completed at home and returned by mail. Variables assessed included emotional adjustment, thought intrusion and avoidance, perceived quality of life, concerns about breast cancer, benefit finding, relationship and sexual disruption, psychosexual adjustment, social support, and coping. Compared to the heterosexual women, lesbians reported less thought avoidance, lower levels of sexual concern, less concern about their appearance, and less disruption in sexual activity, but also substantially lower perceptions of benefit from having had cancer. Lesbians reported less social connection to family, but no group dif

ference emerged in connection to friends. Lesbians reported less denial coping, and more use of support from friends, more venting, and more positive reframing. Better understanding of the similarities and differences between groups will help address the relevant clinical issues appropriately, in order to optimize psychosocial adjustment to breast cancer.

KEYWORDS. Breast cancer, lesbian, coping, social support, psychosexual, benefit finding

Consequences of Frequenting the Lesbian Bar

103

Elisabeth Gruskin, DrPH

Kimberly Byrne, EdD

Susan Kools, RN, PhD

Andrea Altschuler, PhD

Research indicates that lesbians who frequent bars are more likely to drink and that lesbians drink more than their heterosexual counterparts. We explored in detail the consequences of lesbians' bar attendance. We conducted 35 in-person, semi-structured interviews and analyzed the data using qualitative methods. The findings are organized into the following categories: safety and support over the life course; lesbian identity development; reduction of stress; and social networks and intimate relationships. In each category, participants' stories are presented to highlight the health tradeoffs associated with bar patronage, the psychosocial importance of the bar, and the relationship between minority stress and alcohol use. Public health implications are discussed.

KEYWORDS. Alcohol, bars, lesbians, alcohol problems, substance abuse

Comparing Sexual Minority Status Across Sampling Methods and Populations

121

Deborah J. Bowen, PhD

Judith Bradford, PhD

Diane Powers, MA

The health of sexual minority women (SMW) has recently received research attention. Previous research into the health of SMW (e.g., lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered women) used a mixture of sampling methods, many of which were poorly documented and difficult to understand. The results of these previous studies do not present a consistent pattern of findings, possibly due to differences in sampling methods. The present study compared the characteristics of SMW across four survey sampling methods, three in the same geographic area. Differences were found among groups of SMW by sampling method, including in demographic data (e.g., level of education) and personal health data (e.g., rates of regular mammography screening). These findings provided a possible explanation for the variety of findings in the published literature and identified rigorous sampling methods that can be used in future research.

KEYWORDS. Sexual minority women, obesity, intervention design, focus groups