

EXPANDING THE HORIZONS OF BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE WITH QUALITATIVE AND MIXED METHODS RESEARCH: VOICES OF DIVERSE CANCER PATIENTS

Tess Thompson, PhD, MPH1 , Lailea Noel, PhD2 , Tess Thompson, PhD, MPH1 , Kristi Graves, PhD3 , Krystal Warmoth, PhD4 , Qian Lu, Ph.D.4

1Washington University in St. Louis, Webster Groves, MO; 2New York University, New York, NY; 3Georgetown University, Washinton, DC; 4University of Houston, Houston, TX

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed non-skin cancer among African American, Latina, and Asian American women. This symposium examines how qualitative and mixed methods research can allow researchers to better understand the experiences of diverse breast cancer patients in order to inform interventions, enhance treatment, and reduce health disparities. The four presenters will describe their approaches to qualitative and mixed methods research and incorporate cross-cutting perspectives from disciplines including medicine, public health, and social work.

The first presenter will share data from a phenomenological study of the lived experience of African American women from a socially and economically isolated urban environment who delayed initiation of breast cancer treatment for more than six months after identification of a breast abnormality. This presenter will discuss how phenomenological qualitative methodology allows for rich, in-depth data to emerge about this vulnerable group of women. The second presenter will examine how face-to-face qualitative interviews were used to delve more deeply into specific themes with a subsample of participants from a randomized, controlled trial of a video narrative intervention. In this study, married African American breast cancer survivors described how they perceived cancer to have affected their social support, their marital relationship, and their spouse's physical and mental health. The third presenter will describe the social needs and challenges of Chinese American immigrant breast cancer survivors based on an analysis of expressive writing from three writing sessions. The final presenter will discuss mixed-methods results from a study of Latina breast cancer survivors in which qualitative approaches were used to help design an intervention that was tested in a randomized controlled trial, collect evaluation information about the intervention, and measure the study team's engagement with the intervention.

Based on these four presentations, we will discuss the challenges and rewards of using qualitative and mixed-methods techniques in diverse populations. We will address rationales for using qualitative methods, techniques for ensuring methodological rigor, and ways of communicating qualitative findings. The goal is to deepen researchers' and clinicians' understanding of the experiences of diverse breast cancer patients in order to support patients through diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship.