Cues to Participation in Prostate Cancer Screening: A Theory for Practice

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Key Points...

➤ Sources of information about prostate cancer (e.g., healthcare provider, electronic media, print media, interpersonal interactions) vary in their capacity to trigger screening participation.

➤ Men who have heard or read about prostate cancer recently are more likely to be screened than men who have not.

➤ Hearing about prostate cancer from a doctor or nurse significantly predicts screening participation.

➤ Demographic characteristics of men targeted to receive prostate cancer information should be considered in the design of the exposure.

The theory can drive nursing practice by providing insights that promote efficiency and effectiveness (Meleis, 1997). In the absence of theoretical guidelines, however, clinical practice operates on commonly held assumptions. With prostate cancer screening, a commonly held assumption is that if a man is exposed to information about prostate cancer, he will be more likely to participate in screening. Little is actually known, however, about how exposure to prostate cancer information affects screening behavior.

African American men have the highest incidence of prostate cancer in the world (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2000). Screening programs for early detection of prostate cancer for these high-risk men are essential; however, African American men are less likely to have had prior screening and more likely not to participate in free screening (Weinrich, Boyd, Bradford, Mossa, & Weinrich, 1998). Because their prostate cancer often is more advanced before treatment is begun, African American men’s survival rates are decreased sharply when compared to Caucasian men (ACS; Demark-Wahnefried et al., 1995; Frank-Stromborg & Rohan, 1992; Parker, Davis, Wingo, Reis, & Heath, 1998). In fact, African American men are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer as Caucasian men (ACS).

This article describes the development and testing of the Cues to Participation in Prostate Cancer Screening Theory. The theory identifies the need for nurses and other healthcare professionals to know what influences prostate cancer screening, especially in populations of men at highest risk. Specifically, the Cues to Participation Theory was developed to promote understanding about how different kinds of exposure to prostate cancer information affect screening participation in minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged men.