

# Latina Women and Cervical Cancer Screening: Decisional Balance and Self-Efficacy

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**Background:** Latina women in the United States have greater cervical cancer mortality rates than non-Latina women because of their low rates of Papanicolaou (Pap) smear screening.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this article is to assess differences in perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and self-efficacy among Latina women to obtain Pap smears using the framework of the Transtheoretical Model.

**Methods:** A descriptive design with a snowball sample was used. The researchers assessed demographics, three perceived benefits, 12 barriers, and seven self-efficacy measures for 121 Latina women in northern Nevada.

**Findings:** Participants in precontemplation and relapse perceived greater barriers than those in action and maintenance for three items: (a) using a curandero (traditional healer) as treatment for health problems, (b) choosing a curandero to cure an illness before trying Western medicine, and (c) believing curandero medicine to be very effective in treating health problems. Participants in precontemplation and relapse reported lower self-efficacy than those in action and maintenance under the following circumstances: (a) traveling long distances to the Pap smear screening unit and (b) the cost of having a Pap smear. Barriers related to choosing and believing a curandero were significant in the precontemplation and relapse stage.

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Key words: cervical cancer screening; curandero; Latina women; perceived benefits; perceived barriers; self-efficacy

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/16.CJON.E71-E76

Although mortality rates from cervical cancer in the United States have decreased by about 70% since the 1950s—largely because of Papanicolaou (Pap) smear screening (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014)—the benefits of early detection of cervical cancer have not been shared by all ethnic groups. Relative to non-Latina women, Latina women are 1.4 times more likely to develop cervical cancer (9.3 versus 6.5 per 100,000) and to die from cervical cancer (2.7 versus 2 per 100,000) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS] Office of Minority Health, 2016). In 2010, despite the availability of free and low-cost Pap smear screening in the United States, 25% of Latina women aged 18 years and older had not had a Pap smear within the past three years (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2012). Reasons for underuse of Pap

smear screening among Latina women include demographic characteristics (e.g., age, marital status, education level) and other factors, such as perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and self-efficacy (Byrd, Chavez, & Wilson, 2007; Fernández et al., 2009; Lim, 2010; Nuño, Castle, Harris, Estrada, & García, 2011; O'Brien, Halbert, Bixby, Pimentel, & Shea, 2010; Soneji & Fukui, 2013; Watts et al., 2009).

The researchers in the current study explored differences in perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and self-efficacy among Latina women in obtaining Pap smears using the framework of the Transtheoretical Model (TTM). The TTM (Prochaska, Redding, & Evers, 2015) postulates that people progress through a series of stages of change to adopt a new behavior: (a) precontemplation, not considering taking action in the next six months; (b) contemplation, considering taking action in the