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# PUBLIC HEALTH AND COOPERATIVE GROUP PARTNERSHIP: A COLORECTAL CANCER INTERVENTION

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**OBJECTIVES:** *To describe the development of a multi-component colorectal cancer educational tool for female breast cancer survivors through a cooperative group and public health partnership.*

**DATA SOURCES:** *PubMed, World Wide Web, guidelines from professional organizations, surveys and focus groups with breast cancer survivors.*

**CONCLUSION:** *Collaboration is at the core of cooperative group and public health research. This partnership led to the development of a colorectal cancer educational tool for breast cancer survivors. Focus groups revealed that female breast cancer survivors were receptive to education on colorectal cancer screening.*

**IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE:** *Nurses are instrumental in research collaborations between cooperative groups and public health. The colorectal educational intervention for breast cancer survivors serves as an exemplar*

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*Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology is supported by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) grant CA31946.*

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*This document was also supported by Cooperative Agreement Number #DP003924-01A between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. The content of this manuscript is solely the responsibility of the author and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NCI or CDC.*

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*Published by Elsevier Inc.*

*0749-2081/3001-836.00/0.*

*<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.soncn.2013.12.010>*

*of partnerships leading to innovative research planning and implementation outcomes.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Survivors, Neoplasms, Screening, Education, Health disparities, Partnership, Cooperative group*

A unique partnership between state and national public health partners and cooperative groups provides an important avenue and resource for nurse scientists to contribute to cooperative groups and outcomes of clinical trials. Established in 1955, the National Cancer Institute's Clinical Trials Cooperative Group Program has played a key role in developing new and improved cancer therapies.<sup>1</sup> In addition to cancer treatments, the Program explores methods of cancer prevention and early detection, studies quality-of-life and rehabilitation issues, and investigates cancer imaging that targets therapy, surveillance, and biomarkers of therapeutic responses.<sup>2</sup> Public health departments are charged with protecting and promoting the health of communities and the population as a whole, including cancer prevention and control.<sup>3</sup> These shared goals provide the foundation for this unique partnership between public health and the cooperative groups.

This article describes the collaborative approach to the development of a colorectal cancer (CRC) educational tool for female breast cancer survivors. This article describes the study design process, literature review, protocol development, institutional review board (IRB) outcome, survivor focus groups, and pilot testing of the educational tool.

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND COOPERATIVE GROUP

### PARTNERSHIP

The Cooperative Groups conduct clinical trials through networks of cancer centers and community oncology practices across the country with the shared mission to develop and conduct cancer control, prevention, and treatment trials. Clinical trials engage a comprehensive research network; further our understanding of the biological basis of the cancer process and its treatment, from discovery to validation; and provide a scientific and operational infrastructure for innovative clinical and translational research to provide empirical evidence for transforming practice to improve patient outcomes.<sup>2,4</sup>

As defined by The Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health, "Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy."<sup>3</sup> Public health professionals, like clinicians, rely on expert knowledge to guide practice. The information from epidemiology and biostatistics identify and direct resources to address the health needs of the population. While public health is responsible for the public's health, its mission can only be achieved through widespread partnerships.

Public health research of population-based health problems, including biological, environmental, and behavioral issues, has to be conducted at the federal, state, and local levels.<sup>3</sup> Public health agencies seek to cultivate relationships with physicians and other private sector representatives to improve the health of the population.<sup>5</sup> Further, concerns about health care expenditures have presented opportunities for innovative, multi-level approaches to improving health and health care. This project is just one example of a collaborative effort between a cooperative group and public health department focused on secondary prevention, ie, reducing the morbidity and mortality of a largely preventable chronic disease, CRC among breast cancer survivors.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERVENTION

### *Intervention Design Process*

Nursing cooperative studies have been at the forefront of clinical trials in symptom interventions and quality-of-life in the legacy Cancer and Leukemia Group B (CALGB) Cooperative Group (now a part of the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology) (see article by Lester elsewhere in this issue). Interest, support, and input on developing a colorectal intervention were sought from nurse researchers, physicians, public health practitioners, epidemiologists, and prevention specialists. After attending the Oncology Nursing Society Foundation Interdisciplinary Multi-Site Research Training Program in 2006, the effectiveness of screening for CRC, and screening recommendations were presented to

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