



Collaboration Between a Community Engagement Organization and Nurse Researcher to Host a Rural Latina Health Fair/Celebration

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this event was to deliver health screenings and resources to rural Latina women and gather data on their health status and perspectives regarding the event. **Methods:** The “Red Dress Event” incorporated traditional Latino music, a runway show of survivors, cultural dancers, a Spanish-language health and motivational speaker, healthy product vendors, and a health fair offering free laboratory screenings. This format encouraged attendance and engagement while enabling health data collection. **Findings:** Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, expressing gratitude for the resources, entertainment, and cultural connection. Approximately 150 women attended. For certain lab measures, 20–75% of values were outside the normal range. Average systolic blood pressure was 132 mm Hg and diastolic was 82 mm Hg. **Conclusions:** The cultural and social aspects of the event effectively motivated attendance and participation in health screenings. Ongoing partnership between community organizations and health professionals may improve health awareness and outcomes among rural Latina women.

Key words: Latina health; Community engagement; Health screening; Rural health; Cultural event

Introduction

The Latina Red Dress Organization (LRDO), in collaboration with the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s College of Nursing, Cancer Center, and College of Public Health, hosts an annual Latina Red Dress Event to promote health and well-being among Latina women. The mission of LRDO is to improve Latina women’s health through education, empowerment, and resource provision. Attendees receive free laboratory screenings, a nutritious meal, and access to professional and motivational speakers, cultural performances, and cancer memorials.

The event serves as both a celebration and a learning opportunity. Participants gain knowledge about preventive care, communicate with healthcare providers, and connect with community resources.

Purpose / Research Question

The purpose was to engage rural Latina women in educational and screening activities, and to examine their healthcare perceptions and needs. Guiding research questions included:

- What are participants’ primary health concerns?
- What barriers prevent them from accessing healthcare?
- What factors might facilitate improved access?

Methods

1. Organized speakers, vendors, venue, meals, and health fair booths.
2. Secured funding.
3. Conducted the event and collected data.
4. Analyzed results and produced reports.
5. Planned for the following year.

Data included body composition, lab results, and participant survey responses.

Findings

Participant overview: Over two years, 200 women attended; 33 provided complete, usable data.

Body composition (n = 33):

- Body fat: 21–56.4%; 3% underfat, 21% healthy, 36.4% overfat, 39.4% obese.
- Visceral fat: 15% high.
- Bone mass: 42% lower than normal range.
- Body water: 85% underhydrated.
- Blood pressure: 36% stage 2 hypertension, 27% stage 1, 36% normotensive.

Laboratory results (n = 36, fasting):

- Elevated LDL and total cholesterol in 50%.
- GFR below normal in 53%.
- Sodium low in 31%.
- Other abnormalities: MPV (72%), MCHC (39%), A/G ratio (53%), uric acid (28%).

Survey responses:

- 20% had not seen a provider in >1 year.
- 16% cited overweight as their primary concern.
- Barriers included work hours, travel distance, time, fear, cost, and lack of insurance. Over half reported no significant barriers.
- 32% were up to date on mammograms; 12% had received HPV vaccination. Of those eligible for colon cancer screening, 61% had never been screened.

Conclusions

Findings highlight clear health risks and gaps in preventive care among rural Latina women. Many participants expressed limited awareness of hypertension, obesity, and abnormal lab values. Continued community engagement and culturally tailored interventions are essential for fostering trust, awareness, and sustained health improvement within this population.

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Disclosures

None reported.

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