

Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program

Byrne, Margaret

*Department of Epidemiology and Public Health
University of Miami*

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Special Emphasis (2-year project)*

Project Title: Understanding Disparities and Barriers to Participation in Cancer Clinical Trials Among Floridians: A Health Behavior Population-Based Approach

Project Summary: This grant is a comprehensive study of barriers and facilitators to participation in cancer clinical research trials in the state of Florida. Florida has one of the lowest rates of participation in clinical cancer trials in the country. However, as we do not know the root causes of low participation, policy solutions and interventions to increase participation rates have not been developed. This research addresses this question in a study with three distinct, but interlinked, parts. These include: 1) a state-wide examination of participation rates in cancer clinical trials; 2) surveys of cancer patients throughout the state; and 3) surveys of healthcare providers and researchers who conduct research on cancer and/or care for cancer patients. Each part is described in more detail below. To examine statewide rates of cancer clinical trials' participation at the county level, we are using two data sources, the Florida Cancer Data System (FCDS) and the National Cancer Institutes Clinical Trial Cooperative Groups (CTCG) participation data. The FCDS is a comprehensive registry of cancer patients in Florida including incidence rates for all cancer. The CTCG collects national data on participation of individuals in trials run by the Cooperative Groups. Using these and other data, we will build a detailed picture of participation rates at the county level. We will be able to determine, among other things: where participation is lowest; how participation is related to county socioeconomic variables, age distributions, rural/urban setting and availability of cancer centers; and what populations are likely to be the least represented. For the second part of the study, we will focus on cancer patients' beliefs, attitudes, perceived barriers to participation, and perceived factors that could enhance participation in cancer clinical trials. We will identify breast, prostate, lung and colorectal cancer patients through the FCDS and survey equal numbers of patients (total N=1200) who are White, African American and Hispanic, and ensure that patients represent all counties in Florida. We will conduct a mailed, written survey of patients who agree to be in our study. In the third part of the study, we will conduct a survey (N=200) of healthcare providers and researchers to assess attitudes toward clinical trials, perceptions of patients' willingness to participate, and barriers and facilitators faced by providers in identifying and referring patients to trials. We will work with the Florida Society of Clinical Oncology to identify healthcare providers who treat and work with cancer patients. We will ensure that we conduct surveys with individuals in both rural and urban areas, in areas with and without cancer centers, and in areas with high and low percentages of racial/ethnic minorities and the elderly. At the conclusion of our study, we will have the information necessary to develop testable ideas about how participation in clinical trials can be improved in the state of Florida. We will have important knowledge of how participation rates and factors affecting participation rates, vary by location in Florida, by individuals' racial/ethnic background, and by neighborhood characteristics of cancer patients. These results will guide recommendations for improving rates of participation in cancer clinical trials.