Understanding Legislation Related to Women’s Health and Cancer
Rowena Devera, Jejuan Gamble, Keisha Green, Muriel Labonte, Erika Manning, Nicole Stroud, Corey Wright, Rick Albenesius, Kelly Ragucci
Medical University of South Carolina; Charleston, SC

Introduction/Background

Goal of our project
Understanding legislation as it relates to women’s health and cancer

Background
Incidence and mortality rates are higher for S.C. women than rest of nation

Federal Legislation (Two Bills of Interest)

Cancer Screening Coverage Act of 2005 (H.R. 2812)
Will amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, Public Health Service Act and Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require that group and individual health insurance coverage and group health plans provide coverage of screening for breast and colorectal cancer
Referred to House Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, House Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations, House Ways and Means, House Government Reform Committees

Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act of 2005 (S.910)
Will amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, Public Health Service Act and Internal Revenue Code which would require insurance providers that include surgical coverage include inpatient and outpatient lumpectomy treatment as well as radiation therapy. They also prohibit time restrictions after mastectomy, breast conserving surgery or lymph node resection. Providers will not be obliged to get insurance pre-approval.
Referred to the House Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

State Legislation

Although not specifically targeted to women
Clean Indoor Air Act
Create more smoke free environments in our State

Cigarette Tax Increase
Increase funding for Medicaid and prevent youth smoking

Interviews
Waxman Deal provided for breast and cervical cancer screening for poor, uninsured and minorities
First federal legislation passed
All women – poor, uninsured and of minority ethnicity would receive breast and cervical cancer screenings
South Carolina was 1 of 4 States that received grant
Created Best Chance Network in S.C., which has provided breast and cervical cancer screening to over 50,000 women (need to continue support of sponsor, DHEC)

Results

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Method
Research was completed, with a review of current and pending Federal and State legislative issues and overall women’s health statistics in the State of South Carolina
Interviews conducted with a representative from the South Carolina Cancer Alliance and Administrator for Cancer Prevention and Control Research and Outreach
Example Questions:
What have you identified as the greatest health need for S.C. women?
What area of women’s health could most benefit from legislation activity?
What do you see as the role of the health professional student in advocating/assisting with health care legislation?
Are you currently working with other advocates for women’s health legislation and if so, what are their specific platforms?
What are you currently working on to improve the status of women’s health in S.C.? How can we help?

Discussion

Over the years, improvements have been made in S.C. through policy changes; however, there is more that can be done
There is a significant need for individuals and organizations to become effective legislative advocates
Visit the NCI, CDC and American Cancer Society websites to learn more
Join the SCCA
Approach legislators in the community – let your voice be heard
Support the Clean Indoor Air Act and Cigarette Tax Increase

Health care providers are in a unique position to educate political representatives on the medical needs of their patients

Recommendations

Recommendations for Action/Future Plans
Become an advocate with regard to legislative issues affecting women and cancer
Educate young women about various cancers that may affect them, especially since cancer tends to be more aggressive in younger women
Develop educational programs for young women in the community, beginning in the teenage years (visit churches, schools)
Support or coordinate community awareness programs for cancer prevention in general

References
South Carolina Statehouse: http://www.scstatehouse.net
South Carolina Cancer Alliance: http://www.sccanceralliance.org