

Using community engagement to inform and implement a cluster-randomized control trial in the Anishnaabek cervical cancer screening study (ACCSS)

Wood B, Burchell AN, Escott N, Little J, Maar M, Ogilvie G, Severini A, Bishop L, Morrisseau K, Zehbe I.

In Ontario, cervical cancer screening programs are planning to begin HPV vaccination, testing and follow-up programs over the next few years. First Nations communities need a better approach to cervical cancer screening. The *Anishinaabek Cervical Cancer Screening Study* (ACCSS) is looking to find out if self-collected HPV testing is a viable and culturally appropriate method of cervical cancer screening for 11 First Nations communities in the Northwest Ontario.

The ACCSS team has partnered with local Community-Based Research Assistants (CBRAs) in the following communities: Animbiigo Zaagi'ing Anishnaabek (Lake Nipigon), Biinjitiwabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay), Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point), Fort William First Nation, Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay), Long Lake # 58 First Nation, Pays Plat First Nation, Pic Mobert First Nation, Ojibways of Pick River, Red Rock First Nation (Lake Helen), and Whitesand First Nation.

The CBRAs were trained in Thunder Bay, Ontario. They had five goals within the project, these included:

- 1) Find and gather women to be in the screening project
- 2) Communicate and assist women in the project
- 3) Provide women with a study survey
- 4) Communicate frequently with Research Team members to provide updates and engage in discussions to guide and improve future actions
- 5) Continue constant communication between all community partners

Beginning in May 2013, the first phase of the study began with some communities starting with scheduled Pap tests with local healthcare providers, while other communities start with a self-collected kit, survey and consent form.

The research team, members of the Community Steering Committee (CSC), and the CBRAs met in September 2013 to discuss the first phase of the study and to reflect on ideas for the second phase. It became clear that “in-person” communication was the most effective way to reach First Nations women and will be included in the second phase.

The ACCSS project recognizes that working with local community members, and political leaders including Chief and Council members is important in reducing the burden of HPV and cervical cancer in our partnering First Nation communities.