B3.1: Identifying challenges for effective delivery of SIDS education and outreach among African American women in two Mississippi communities

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Abstract:
Introduction: The African American population bears a disproportionate burden of SIDS, a phenomenon noted throughout the world and shared by Mississippi infants. The purpose of this study was to assess the level of SIDS-related knowledge among African American women to identify challenges and weaknesses in methods for education and outreach.

Method(s): Six focus groups were conducted among African American women in urban and rural communities in Mississippi. The benefit of focus group research is to gain insight into people’s shared understandings of everyday life experiences and the influences and impact of these emotions. Six focus groups were held (n=57) in two geographical areas of the state. The researcher directed the initial discussion and then participants led the remainder of the discussion
based on their experiences and knowledge. Focus group sessions were audio recorded and transcribed for later analysis. Data were analyzed utilizing qualitative methodology to identify themes and commonalities across groups.

**Results:** Themes were common among participants from both the metropolitan (n=29) and rural (n=28) Delta communities. Participants in both geographical areas were familiar with [or at least had previously heard] the term SIDS. Unfortunately, there was inconsistency among participants as to the source of information. Given the inconsistencies, it is not surprising that overall knowledge related to SIDS was incomplete and in some cases inaccurate.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** SIDS information is not fully understood and is not consistently distributed resulting in a lack of knowledge among African American women extending the risk for high rates of SIDS events in Mississippi. The cultural influences and perceptions that discussion of death and dying poses a threat or “bad luck” seems to be a practical explanation for challenges associated with educational tools and strategies. Transitioning to phrases such as saving babies and saving lives rather than using terms such as death and dying presents as a logical evolution for educational materials to follow. Because Mississippi has traditionally led the nation in SIDS deaths and overall infant mortality, it is important that actions be taken to reduce infant deaths and reduce disparities in birth outcomes.

**Abstract History:**

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