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Qualitative research as a contribution to the understanding of the breach between the biomedical speech and the social representations of gynecologic cancer screening programs in Ecuador

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Cervical cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in Ecuadorian women, only surpassed by stomach cancer. The incidence of this cancer varies widely from 19 to 32/100,000 inhabitants. Regarding breast cancer, it is the third leading cause of death from cancer and the incidence is increasing (30/100,000). Poor coverage of cancer screening programs in impoverished population and rural groups is mentioned as the main cause of this issue. Gynecological cancer screening programs in Ecuador are promoted by health authorities and are integrated into broader health programs such as sexual and reproductive care or elderly care. Based on the concept of social representations, the evaluations, knowledge and experiences of gynecological cancer screening programs users were explored through focus groups and in-depth interviews. Research suggests participating women develop understanding of cancer screening programs based on messages provided by health professionals and other sources of information such as social media and close relatives' experiences. Interviewed women were confused on the concepts of gynecological cancer screening programs provided by health system and their stories were associated with pain and discomfort. Research showed information provided by health professionals was perceived as normative, prescriptive, authoritarian and therefore discouraging. In contrast, social media campaigning were found to be a more effective tool because interviewed women easily associated those messages with their own lives. Authors propound medical speech will be more effective when health care providers understand communication as an ethic and empathetic human meeting. Health care professionals should be nourished with theoretical proposals that conceive the world as a network of relationships, connections, patterns of behavior and cultural setting. The authors believe this holistic approach will allow a more integrated understanding of the complexity of problematic health.

Biography

Yolanda Godoy is a Medical School Professor in Quito. She is a Family Physician and works on qualitative research in the area of sexual and reproductive health, trying to find different ways to improve the doctor-patient relationship and the bio-psychosocial model.

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