

Background

Breast cancer is the most frequent malignant neoplasm in the female Peruvian population; however, the country has poor coverage (<1%) of breast cancer screening through mammography, mainly due to the low availability of mammograms in health facilities of the Ministry of Health (MINSA).

This means that many poor women, assisted by the MINSA public health insurance, do not have access to mammography. For this reason, the non-profit organization Socios En Salud implemented a community intervention to identify women candidate for screening mammography to facilitate access to a free mammography.

Methods

The project was carried out in the catchment area of two primary-care health centers of the MINSA located in the districts of Carabayllo and Comas (Northern Lima).

The targeted population were:

- 1) 50-69 years old women, and
- 2) 40-49 years old women or older than 69 with additional risk factors (history of breast cancer or close relatives with breast cancer).

The population was identified by:

- 1) active case finding by 4 community health workers (CHW),
- 2) identification in primary health centers,
- 3) identification by Chat Bot, and
- 4) identification by dissemination through social networks.

The identified women were accompanied by the CHW to carry out a clinical breast examination in the health center, to receive free mammography in a private services, and to carry out complementary/confirmatory examinations (if needed) in more complex facilities of MINSA.



Figure N° 1: Community health worker inviting a woman to participate in the project and educating about breast cancer



Figure N° 2: Project participant preparing for her mammogram

Findings

- A total of 977 women were recruited (100%): 68% were recruited by 4 CHW, 28% in the two health centers, 2.5% by the Chat Bot and 1% by social networks.
- Seventy percent (70%) of women had never had a mammography.
- Of the total, 883 (90%) agreed to undergo a clinical breast examination, and of these, 837 (95%) agreed to undergo mammography.
- Nine women with BIRADS 4 result were referred to more complex facilities for complementary examinations that ruled out malignancy in all the cases.
- The limited availability of ultrasound and biopsy services generated delays of 3-4 months for complementary post-mammography care.

Interpretation

The CHW were the main means of recruiting the target population, corroborating their importance in community interventions in low- and middle-income countries with limited health personnel. Involving private health services can help make up for public sector mammography gaps.

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