

## **Pelvic Exam Experiences Among Spanish-Speaking-Only Women**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** The pelvic examination is a critical part of a woman's preventative and reproductive healthcare by screening for early cervical cancer and other gynecological conditions. Hispanic/Latina patients are less likely to have received a pelvic exam in the past year, particularly if they have low-English proficiency, despite having the highest incidence of cervical cancer compared to other races and ethnicities in the United States.

**Methods:** This mixed methods study aimed to identify factors that influence the experience of Spanish-speaking-only female-identifying patients during routine pelvic examinations. Data were collected via online surveys and semi-structured interviews with nulliparous Spanish-speaking-only patients aged 18-35 who had recently undergone a pelvic exam. Qualitative content analysis using the Health Belief Model as a theoretical framework was conducted to generate themes on participants' experiences.

**Results:** Twelve individuals completed interviews, and 10 completed the survey. All participants reported a positive experience and would consider receiving a pelvic exam in the future. Patients perceived many health benefits to receiving a pelvic exam but tended to over-attribute the exam's ability to screen for all gynecologic conditions. Clinical factors that contributed to a more positive pelvic exam included level of communication during the exam, provider effort to speak Spanish, having a female provider, sense of control during the exam, and use of clean technique.

**Discussion:** Interventions to improve patient knowledge of the pelvic exam and its limitations in screening for gynecologic conditions are needed for Spanish-speaking-only patients to prevent a false sense of security that could hinder patients' trust in the healthcare system. Clinicians may improve patient experience by explaining the indications for receiving the pelvic exam, describing the steps of the pelvic exam during the visit, and by making an effort to speak Spanish.