Reviewer's report

Title: An Evaluation of the Integration of Non-Traditional Learning Tools into a Community Based Breast and Cervical Cancer Education Program: The Witness Project of Buffalo

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Reviewer: Georgia Sadler

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

This paper will help guide health educators who seek to replicate the Witness Program. The educational program addresses a community that experiences health disparities for nearly every life threatening disease and hence has the potential to make important contributions to reversing these disparities.

The manuscript would benefit from reorganization to improve the clarity and ease of reading. The abstract and background sections are well written.

The authors talk about integrating "non-traditional learning tools," but these tools are not well defined or identified. Are they non-traditional because they are not normally incorporated into community-based learning programs? Or are they "non-traditional learning tools" because they are learning tools that are not traditionally used by the African American community? Exactly which tools were the non-traditional ones?

This paper is a description of a 6-8 week training program, but much of the description of the program is included in the results sections. The information in the "Outcomes" section (included late in the Results section) comprises the true results of this training intervention.

A nice summary statement of the whole training program at the end of the Background section would be a nice segue into the Methods section and also help guide the reader through the very lengthy and detailed description. For example, "The authors offer a description of an eight week training program created to help reduce the breast and cervical cancer related morbidity and mortality rates within the African American community. The training program begins with an evening presentation of the Witness Program and an eight-hour training session on the following day so that volunteer trainers can learn how to run their own Witness Programs. Following this in-depth training session, there are between six and eight additional weekly, hour-long training sessions that take the participants to full mastery of all the information they will need." The methods section could then follow with the detailed description of each component of the training program.

Generally the "Description of the Sample" section is the last paragraphs of the Methods section rather than the first section of the Results section. The description of the sample would be better if
the qualities that were sought in the participants (currently in the first paragraph of the section titled "Witness Project Program Design") led the "Description of the Sample" section (currently the first section of the Results section).

The article also lacks a short conclusion.

The article is generous in the details it offers to the reader, possibly to a fault. The article is more of a manual of how to replicate the program than a short concise report of the authors’ experiences with the training program. If the Journal can afford the space, then this is not a problem. If this is to be a manual of sorts, then the authors might wish to consider providing additional references in the Background section to give the reader a greater understanding of the field.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.