

**Evaluating the Effectiveness of Community Forums
Bay Area Breast Cancer and Environment Research Center
Community Outreach and Translation Core (COTC)**

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Abstract:

Community forums are widely used as models for translating research and technical information, for communicating risk and for eliciting community involvement. This project sought to evaluate the effectiveness of community forums as an early and effective communication model for translating research and technical information, for communicating risk and facilitating an interactive exchange among public health professionals, researchers and community members. “Critical Issues in Biomonitoring”, a Bay Area community forum, was held October 9, 2004 in San Francisco. Biomonitoring has the potential to make a significant contribution to the research on the role environmental factors play in the development of disease, including breast cancer. Although biomonitoring is considered a powerful tool for closing the gaps in environmental exposure data, it is still an emerging science. The uncertainties associated with biomonitoring, combined with a growing public interest in its use, highlight the need to develop communication models that facilitate an interactive exchange of information and concerns among community members, breast cancer advocates, laboratory technologists, researchers, medical ethicists, public health professionals, and health care providers.

This project describes the evaluation process and reports on the extent to which attendees, both speakers and community members, were satisfied with the forum as a method for informing community members about individual and group risks and benefits of participating in biomonitoring studies; educating a broad audience of researchers, public health professionals, health providers, breast cancer advocates, environmentalists, scientists and community members about the current state of biomonitoring; engaging in informed and shared decision-making activities with individuals representing diverse perspectives, experiences and expertise; involving community members in setting priorities for future local biomonitoring studies; identifying partnerships interested in collaborating on community-based, participatory breast cancer research studies using biomonitoring; and disseminating information from the forum, including results of assessments and evaluations, to relevant stakeholders.