

## Developing topics

# Engaging rural older minority adults in dementia research during a pandemic-associated quarantine

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### Abstract

**Background:** Rural-dwelling individuals are at heightened risk for dementia syndromes as they age. Recognizing that faith institutions are bulwarks in rural communities, we partnered with churches to design research that aims to improve knowledge of, and promote screening for, dementia. Since recruitment began just as COVID-19 emerged, in-person recruitment ceased. We developed a virtual protocol to train health educators and engage rural, racially diverse congregants.

**Method:** Guided by Schoenberg's (2011) "Faith Moves Mountains" model, health educators were trained via videoconferencing, using Alzheimer's Association online English/Spanish resources. Educators approached 35 congregants to administer telephone-based teaching, pre-post tests of dementia knowledge, and dementia screening.

**Results:** Thirty rural older adults responded to faith health educator tele-recruitment and intervention. Pre-post knowledge surveys showed significant improvement ( $r=.67$ ,  $p=.04$ ). Thirteen (43%) completed dementia screening, followed by referral to a memory telehealth clinic.

**Conclusion:** This faith-based model shows promise for reaching isolated rural residents facing dementia risk.