

Awareness of the Role of Physical Activity in Colon Cancer Prevention

Elliot J. Coups, Ph.D.¹, Jennifer Hay, Ph.D.², & Jennifer S. Ford, Ph.D.²

¹ Fox Chase Cancer Center ² Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

Introduction

- Colon cancer is the third most common form of cancer in the U.S.
- Approximately 112,000 cases of colon cancer are expected in the U.S. this year
- Many cases of colon cancer could be prevented with the adoption of appropriate screening and lifestyle behaviors
- An estimated 13-14% of colon cancer cases can be attributed to lack of physical activity
- Engaging in regular physical activity greatly reduces the risk of colon cancer
 - 30-40% risk reduction among the most active compared to sedentary individuals
 - Both recreational and occupational physical activities decrease risk
 - Sedentary individuals who later become active can reduce their colon cancer risk
- Previous research has shown that there is low public awareness of the role of physical activity in colon cancer prevention
- However, little is known about the characteristics of individuals who are not aware of the role of physical activity in colon cancer prevention

Methods

Procedure

- Data drawn from the 2005 Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS)
- National probability survey of 5,586 U.S. adults (overall response rate = 20.8%)
- One-time telephone or Internet survey
- Analyses were conducted using SUDAAN

Sample

- 1,932 individuals who were selected at random to answer questions about colon cancer
- 52% female, *M* age = 52 years, 71% white, 24% college graduates

Measures

- Lack of awareness of the role of physical activity in colon cancer prevention*
 - "What are some things that people can do to reduce their chances of getting colon cancer?"
 - Individuals not listing physical activity in response to this question were coded as not being aware of its role in colon cancer prevention.
- Potential Correlates*
 - Demographics
 - Knowledge of colon cancer symptoms
 - Adherence to colon cancer screening (among those aged 50+)
 - Level of physical activity
 - Believing that physical activity recommendations are confusing
 - Reported exposure to information about physical activity and cancer
 - Reported ever looking for information about cancer

Results

85.0% of participants **did not** list **physical activity** as something people can do to reduce their colon cancer risk

		% Not Listing Physical Activity
Gender	Male	85.1
	Female	84.9
Age**	18-39	85.5
	40-49	77.7
	50-59	88.4
	60-69	85.3
	≥ 70	90.5
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic	89.2
	White	83.7
	Black	84.3
	Other	86.8
Education***	≤ High school	91.4
	≥ Some college	79.9
Know Any Symptoms of Colon Cancer***	Yes	79.8
	No	90.3
Adherent to Colon Cancer Screening	Yes	86.3
	No	90.4
Physical Activity***	Sedentary	92.7
	Some activity	84.8
	Meet recs.	82.4
Believe that Physical Activity Recs. are Confusing**	Yes	89.4
	No	77.6
Exposure in Past Year to Information About Physical Activity and Cancer*	Yes	78.1
	No	90.2
Ever Looked for Information About Cancer ***	Yes	80.9
	No	89.1

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Conclusions

- A large proportion (85%) of U.S. adults are not aware that physical activity reduces the risk of colon cancer
- Lack of awareness is even higher in certain subpopulations
- It may be especially important to promote awareness of the effects of physical activity on colon cancer risk among those at increased risk for colon cancer
- This study informs future efforts to increase awareness of the role of physical activity in colon cancer prevention, which in turn may motivate individuals to be more physically active

Acknowledgements

This research was supported in part by Grants R25 CA057708-13 (Coups) and K07 CA98106 (Hay) from the National Cancer Institute.

Contact: Elliot J. Coups, Ph.D.
elliott.coups@fccc.edu