

Health Beliefs, Self-Efficacy, Information Seeking: The Effect of Risk Perceptions and Worry

Mihaela Moldovan¹, Ph.D., Gary R. Heald², Ph.D.

¹Center of Excellence in Cancer Communication Research, University of Pennsylvania, ²Florida State University



Background

- This study explores a modified version of the risk perception attitude framework (RPA) and focuses on risk perceptions and worry as grouping factors to determine variation in health related beliefs and behaviors.
- It is hypothesized that the effect of risk perceptions on individuals' self-efficacy and fatalistic beliefs, their health and cancer information seeking behavior and their sunscreen use is influenced by their cancer-related concerns (worrying about developing cancer).

Based on the modified RPA, four perception groups are tentatively identified.

		Risk Perception	
		Low	High
Worry	Low	Apathetic	Detached
	High	Fatalistic	Alert

- Perceived risk represents an important predictor of health behaviors.
- In the presence of high levels of anxiety, worry or fear, increased risk perceptions may also act as inhibitors to involvement in health behaviors.
- Risk perceptions and cancer concerns (worry) influence perceived self-management ability, processing of information and other cancer beliefs.
- Differentiating between individuals with specific characteristics/needs allows for targeted health campaign messages and programs.
- Identifying group membership facilitates promotion of health behaviors that are most relevant to the group.

Method

Data

Health Information National Trend Survey 2007

Sample = 7,674

Jackknife weighting procedure

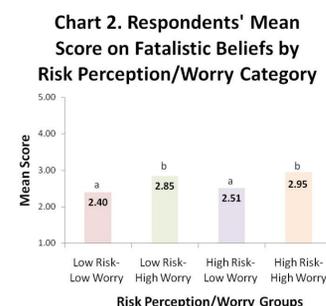
Measures

- Risk Perceptions: How likely do you think it is that you will develop cancer in the future? (1- not likely to 5 – very likely),
- Worry: How often do you worry about getting cancer? (1 – rarely or never to 4 – always),
- Health/cancer information seeking (yes/no),
- Self Efficacy: How confident are you about your ability to take care of yourself? (1 – not at all confident to 5 very confident),
- Fatalistic beliefs: When I think of cancer I automatically think of death (1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree),
- Avoiding Doctor: I avoid seeking my doctor because I fear I may have a serious illness (1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree),
- Sunscreen usage: How often do you apply sunscreen? (1 – never to 5 – always).

Analysis

Exploratory mean comparisons and chi-square tests.

Preliminary Findings



Note: Means sharing the same subscript have confidence intervals that overlap at $p < .05$.

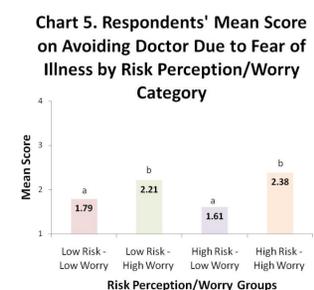
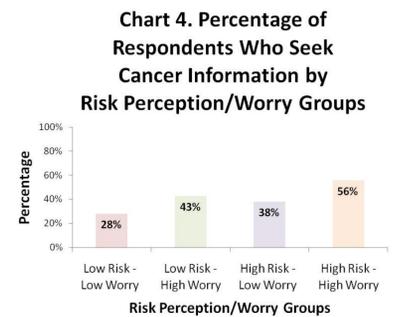
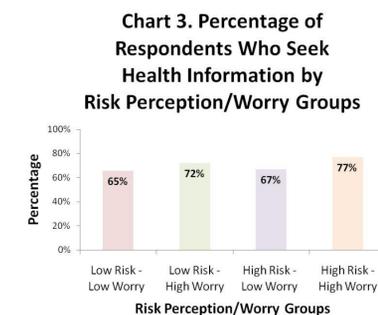


Chart 3, Design-based F statistics = 6.2 $p < .05$
 Chart 4, Design-based F statistic = 35.9, $p < .05$

Preliminary Findings

- Individuals who report high risk perceptions/worry, compared to their counterparts, indicate lower self-efficacy and higher fatalistic beliefs about cancer.
- High versus low worry/risk perception groups differ in terms of their likelihood of engaging in health or cancer information seeking behaviors and report avoiding the doctor due to fear of finding a serious illness.
- Means were similar among all groups in terms of their sunscreen use.
- Individuals' levels of worry, compared to their risk perceptions, might have a greater impact on cancer-related beliefs and behaviors.
- Messages directed at high worry individuals should increase their perceived self-efficacy and perceived control about managing or surviving cancer.

Please address all correspondence to Mihaela Moldovan (mmoldovan@asc.upenn.edu)