

ORIGINAL PAPER

Effectiveness of a Brief Health Education Intervention for Breast Cancer Prevention in Greece Under Economic Crisis

Kyriakoula Merakou, BA, MSc, PhD

Teaching and Research Associate, Dept. of Public and Administrative Health, National School of Public Health, Athens, Greece

Aggeliki Papagiannopoulou, MD, MSc

Doctor of Public Health, Ministry of Health & Social Solidarity, Dept. of Public Health, Athens, Greece

Maria Chania, BA, MSc

Nurse Officer, General Hospital of Sparta, Sparta, Greece

Dionysios Vaidakis, MD, MSc

Postgraduate student of the National School of Public Health, Athens, Greece

Ioannis Zachos, BA, MSc in Public Health

Organization Against Drugs (OKANA), Athens, Greece

Anastasia Barbouni, MD, MSc, PhD

Teaching and Research Associate, Dept. of Public and Administrative Health, National School of Public Health, Athens, Greece

Correspondence: Merakou Kyriakoula, Dept. of Public and Administrative Health, National School of Public Health, Athens, 11521, Greece E-mail: kmerakou@esdy.edu.gr

Abstract

Background: Prevalence rates in breast cancer have now reached epidemic levels. One of the main reasons behind onset of breast cancer is poor preventive beliefs and behavior of women towards cancer prevention. We examined the effectiveness of health education intervention in two communities of South Greece.

Objective: The study investigates the effectiveness of a brief health education intervention on women's beliefs and behaviour changes concerning breast cancer prevention.

Methodology: A 90-minute, one-off encounter, health education study was designed for 300 women from Peloponissos, South Greece. A Health Belief Model questionnaire, was used before the intervention, immediately after and 6-months after the intervention.

Results: Despite certain perception-related barriers (embarrassment, anxiety, ect) women's overall beliefs towards breast cancer prevention (perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits and perceived barriers) changed positively after the health education intervention and this change was sustained at 6-month follow up. However, specific barriers (embarrassment, fear of pain, anxiety when anticipating tests' results) were not maintained at the same level of post-intervention during the same follow up. During the follow up period, women performed breast self-examination every month (73%) and 55.10% had breast examination by a clinician and underwent a mammography.

Conclusions: Short, low cost, health education interventions for breast cancer prevention to women can be effective in changing beliefs and behaviour. Tailored interventions are necessary to overcome relapsing of specific barriers. Emphasis should be given on the importance of doctor/nurse role in breast screening.

Key-Words: breast cancer, clinical breast examination, mammography, beliefs, behaviour