

How Risk Perceptions and Level of Trust of Information Influence Individuals' Health Services Usage

Background: When facing health-related issues, decision-making is not an easy thing. Some people look for advice from health care professionals, and some people trust their family members' and friends' experiences more. Previous studies in health communication have suggested differences across various demographic groups in information seeking access and skills, including variables related to the knowledge gap assumption and individuals' risk perceptions.

Methods: Multiple linear regression and logistic regression are used to examine how individuals' health risk perceptions influence their health service usage by analyzing the Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) 5 Cycle 4. HINTS conducts national surveys to monitor the influence and changes in cancer communication among U.S. adult citizens. It is a cross-sectional survey of the adult population conducted every few years by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) since 2003. HINTS 5 Cycle 4 data were collected from February through June in 2020 with 3,865 respondents participated in the study.

Results: The results showed that people who have higher risk perceptions are more likely to seek health information and seek information online. In addition, socioeconomic status (SES), age, and race/ethnicity also impact individuals' health information-seeking behaviors as well as health service usage.

Conclusion: Health professionals' recommendations often have a significant influence on individuals' decision-making. If health professionals can spend just a couple of extra minutes in conversation with patients and their family members to emphasize the importance of health service usage (eg. Examination, regular body checkout), individuals' willingness of using health services may be changed.

Keywords: internet usage, trust, risk perceptions, health service usage, information seeking