Men's and women's knowledge and perceptions of breast cancer and mammography screening.

Submitted by echamot on Mon, 09/08/2014 - 11:18am

Title

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Publication Type
Journal Article

Year of Publication
2002

Authors
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Journal
Prev Med

Volume
34

Issue
3

Pagination
380-5

Date Published
2002 Mar

ISSN
0091-7435

Keywords
Adult, Age Distribution, Aged, Aged, 80 and over, Attitude to Health, Breast Neoplasms, Female, Health Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice, Humans, Linear Models, Male, Mammography, Mass Screening, Middle Aged, Population Surveillance, Probability, Questionnaires, Risk Factors, Sex Distribution, Socioeconomic Factors, Switzerland

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Although most men are not directly affected by breast cancer, they participate in decisions influencing breast cancer screening and contribute to shaping the social norm on mammography screening. This study tested the hypothesis that men may be less knowledgeable than women about breast cancer and mammography and have less favorable perceptions of mammography screening.

METHODS: A survey was mailed to 952 women and 370 men aged 40 to 80 years, randomly selected from the general population of Geneva, Switzerland. Information collected included knowledge and perceptions about breast cancer and mammography, familiarity with screening recommendations, and perceived usefulness of an organized screening program.

RESULTS: Men were almost as knowledgeable as women about breast cancer (difference in z-scores: -0.12; 95% CI: -0.25, 0.02; P = 0.10) and breast cancer screening (difference: -0.12; 95% CI: -0.25, 0.02; P = 0.09). Both men and women perceived mammography screening to be useful, but men had significantly higher z-scores of positive attitude toward mammography than women (difference: 0.28; 95% CI: 0.14, 0.42; P < 0.001). Younger and more educated respondents of either sex were both more knowledgeable and more favorably inclined toward screening.

CONCLUSION: Men were as knowledgeable about breast cancer and mammography
screening as women but had more favorable attitudes toward breast cancer screening than women. Actions to strengthen community support for mammography screening programs should primarily target older and less educated persons of either sex.

DOI 10.1006/pmed.2001.0999
Alternate Journal Prev Med
PubMed ID 11902856