

Healthy People's Cancer Information Seeking is Associated with Psychological Distress and General Exposure to Media Health Information

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Purpose

Explore whether psychological distress and health media exposure are related to cancer information seeking among people who do not have cancer.

Background

Information serves important functions in cancer prevention

Past research shows that anxiety, response efficacy and information efficacy predict information seeking

Psychological distress and health media exposure may influence anxiety and efficacy

Method

2005 HINTS data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Only cancer-free respondents were included (N=4707).

Measures

Psychological distress	6-item scale
Health media exposure	Exposure to health information in the print media, TV, and the Internet
Risk	How likely do you think it is that you will develop...?
Anxiety	How often do you worry about ...?

Measures (Cont.)

Response efficacy	There's not much you can do to lower your chances of getting...
Information efficacy	Overall, how confident are you that you could get advice or information about cancer if you needed it?
Cancer information seeking	Have you ever looked for information about cancer from any source?

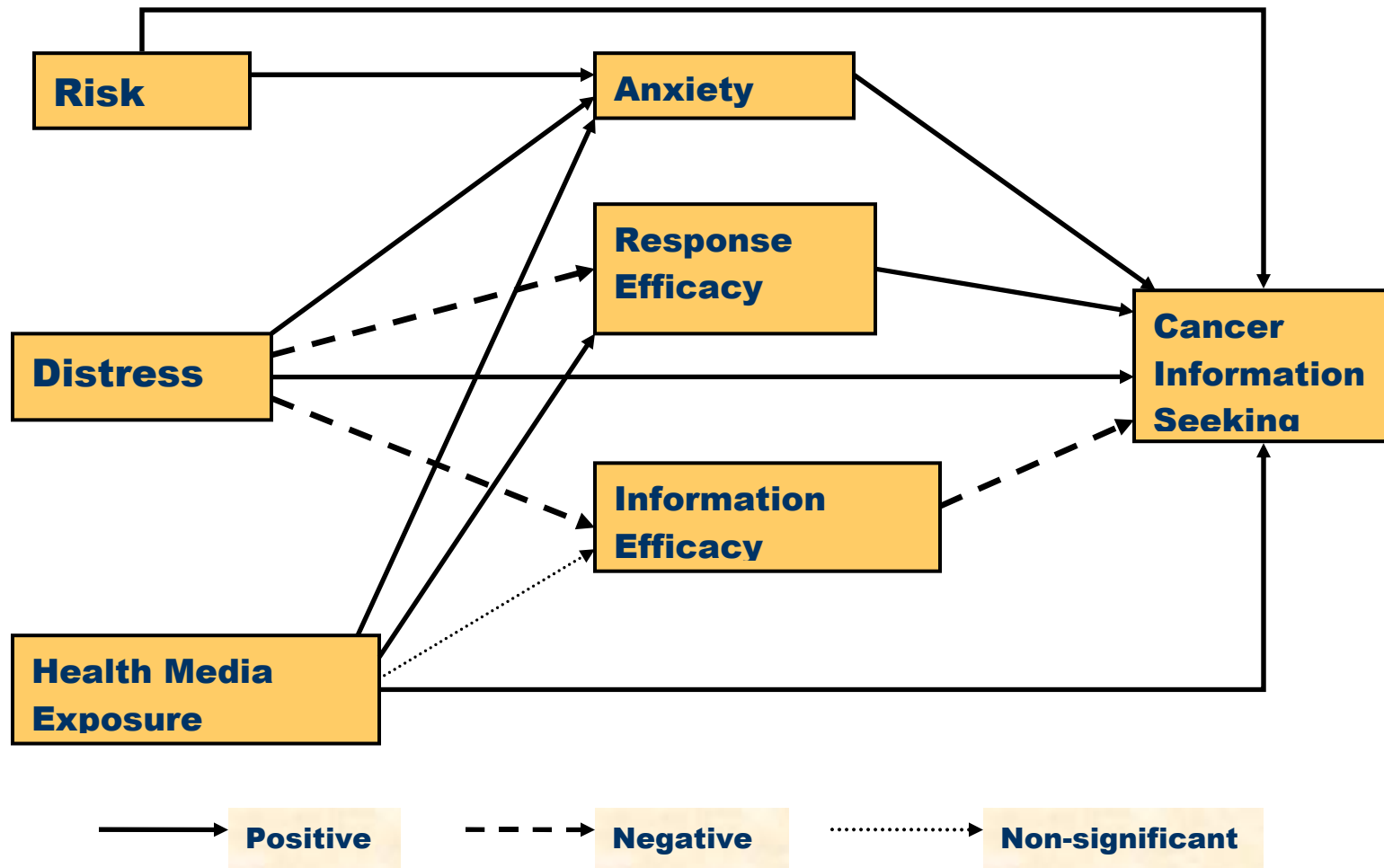
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer questions about perceived risk, worry, and preventability of colon, skin, or lung cancer. Their answers were collapsed across cancer type.

Analysis

Demographics were controlled using a regression procedure prior to model estimation.

The hypothesized model fit the data very well, $\chi^2=12.5$, $df=6$, $p>.05$, TLI=.97, CFI=.99, RMSEA=.02.

Results



Risk ($\beta=.05^{}$), anxiety ($\beta=.04^{*}$), and response efficacy ($\beta=.07^{***}$) positively predicted cancer information seeking. Information efficacy, unexpectedly, emerged as a negative predictor ($\beta=-.05^{***}$).**

Psychological distress positively predicted anxiety ($\beta=.10^{*}$). It negatively predicted response efficacy ($\beta=-.09^{***}$) and information efficacy ($\beta = -.08^{***}$). Its direct relationship with cancer information seeking was positive ($\beta=.04^{**}$).**

Health media exposure positively predicted anxiety ($\beta=.04^{*}$) and response efficacy ($\beta = .08^{*}$). It did not predict information efficacy. Its direct relationship with cancer information seeking was positive ($\beta=.19^{***}$).**

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

Discussion

Psychological distress seems to influence non-patients' cancer information seeking in complex ways. It augments seeking through increasing anxiety but also impedes seeking through lowering efficacy.

Health media exposure overall appears to be a positive factor in non-patients' cancer information seeking.

The negative relationship between information efficacy and cancer information seeking is a surprise finding. Further investigation is needed.

Limitations

Cross-sectional data

Mostly simple-item measures with limited variation