

Physical Activity and General Practitioners in the Province of Trento, Italy 2006: The relationship between their personal practices and the counselling provided to their patients



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Background

- ✦ Regular physical activity (PA) plays an important role in physical and mental well-being
- ✦ Studio PASSI 2005 demonstrated that >50% of the population of Trento did not meet international guidelines for PA, and only 37% reported having received advice regarding PA from their general practitioner (GP)
- ✦ In response, local intervention undertaken that consisted of mailing PA counselling guidelines to all local GPs

Objectives

- ✦ Assess counselling practices of GPs 6 months after the mail-out of patient PA guidelines
- ✦ Evaluate levels of PA practiced by GPs
- ✦ Evaluate the relationship between the GPs' personal practices and the counselling provided to their patients

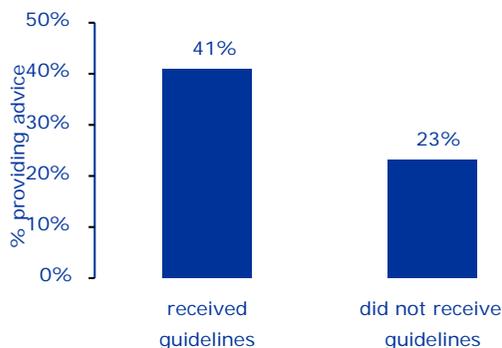
Methods

- ✦ Telephone survey of all 398 GPs active in the Province of Trento using a modified PASSI questionnaire
- ✦ Response rate was 92% (365/398)
- ✦ Definition of meeting PA guidelines:
 - Engages in moderate-intensity physical activities for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more days of the week OR vigorous-intensity physical activity 3 or more days per week for 20 or more minutes per occasion

Results 1: Did GPs actually receive the guidelines, and did they change their counselling practices?

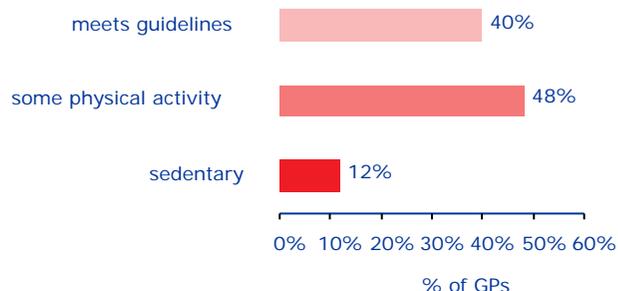
- ✦ Of those interviewed 92% stated they had received the guidelines, of whom 35% reported that they subsequently provided more PA counselling to their patients

Results 2: Did guidelines affect whether GPs provided advice to patients on where they might go to exercise?



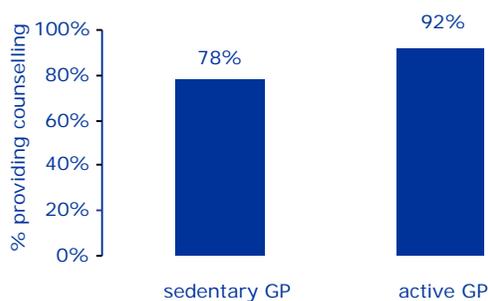
GPs who reported receiving guidelines were more likely to provide advice to their patients on where they might go to exercise ($p = 0.08$)

Results 3: How many GPs personally engage in adequate levels of physical activity?



Only 40% of GPs engaged in adequate levels of PA

Results 4: How do GPs' personal practices influence their counselling behavior?



GPs who engaged in at least some PA were more likely to provide PA counselling to their patients ($p = 0.004$)

Conclusions

- ✦ Providing guidelines to GPs has improved their promotion of PA among their patients, although observed values may be an overestimate resulting from social desirability bias
- ✦ GPs who themselves meet PA guidelines are more likely to promote PA to their patients
- ✦ PASSI was useful in identifying a local health problem, and the current surveillance system will permit ongoing monitoring of additional interventions