

Using the BRFSS data to prioritize public health resources

Prioritizing public health resources is a necessary step in the planning of public health programs. The Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System (BRFSS) is available in all states in the United States (US). A prioritization model is described that uses data from the Missouri state BRFSS in 2000, and epidemiological measures to construct six priority criteria: size (the prevalence of a risk factor), severity (population-based risk for highest mortality disease attributed to the risk factor), urgency (annual percent change in prevalence of risk factor), preventability (evidence-based score on intervention to reduce risk factor), community support (score of social support for preventive action) and racial-disparity (race comparison through prevalence rate ratio). A measure value is weighted to indicate its importance: 0.5 for low; 1.0, average; and 2.0, high. In a comparison of the top priority chronic conditions between the Missouri Department of Health budget and the Priority BRFSS model (all criteria used), the rank order of conditions differed significantly between methods and the Priority BRFSS model identified two additional conditions. This prioritization model is available in Priority MICA, one of the web based interactive tools that makes available data from a wide variety of surveillance systems (www.dhss.mo.gov/MICA). This model can be used by departments of health with behavioral risk factor surveillance data to distribute resources across prevention strategies aiming at reducing risk factors for chronic diseases and conditions.

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