

**ORIGINAL PAPER**

**Effectiveness of a Community-Based Health Education Intervention in Cervical Cancer Prevention in Greece**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Women's beliefs are one of the main reasons for not undergoing Pap-test for cervical cancer prevention. Health education programs could help change these beliefs and motivate women to adopt a preventive health behavior.

**Objectives:** This study aims to assess the modification in women's beliefs and behavior about cervical cancer prevention after the implementation of a health education intervention.

**Methodology:** A health education intervention for cervical cancer prevention was implemented to 300 women in two prefectures of southern Greece. The experimental group received a 120-minute health education intervention, based on the Health Beliefs Model (HBM) including a lecture, discussion and leaflets. The hypotheses were a) will this brief intervention change women's beliefs (perceived susceptibility to cervical cancer, benefits and barriers of undergoing the Pap-test)? b) will this change in beliefs sustain in six months follow-up period? and c) will women undergo pap-test in six months period? The women filled in an anonymous questionnaire, based on the Health Belief Model (HBM), before, immediately after and six months after the program.

**Results:** The health education intervention significantly modified women's beliefs and behaviors towards pap-test. The greater changes in women's beliefs were observed in their sense of susceptibility towards the disease and the benefits of prevention which were sustained or improved after six months. Perceived barriers to undergo the Pap-test, pain, embarrassment, and worry for the results decreased immediately after the program but started relapsing in the six month follow up period. Moreover, 88.1% of the women answered that they had underwent a Pap-test during the following six months.

**Conclusions:** This health education intervention modified women's beliefs and behavior about cervical cancer prevention. Short, low cost, health education interventions for breast cancer prevention to women can be effective in changing beliefs and behaviour.

**Key words:** cervical cancer; HBM; women, beliefs, health education, effectiveness, behavior change