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PREVENTIVE HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

PERCEPTION OF CHRONIC DISEASE SCREENING AND FOLLOW-UP AMONG SINGAPOREANS

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Background

Chronic diseases result in significant disease burden in Singapore. There have been considerable efforts to increase screening uptake, including the introduction of a nationwide Screen for Life Programme. As a follow-up to screening, compliance to post-screening follow-up tends to be poor. This study was conducted to identify common barriers towards chronic diseases screening and post-screening follow-up.

Methods

This was a cross-sectional study that engaged Singaporeans and permanent residents in a questionnaire. Participants had to be aged ≥ 40 years old and residing in Radin Mas housing estate Housing Development Board blocks to be eligible. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' barriers towards chronic disease screening and post-screening follow-up.

Results

A total of 672 individuals completed the questionnaire. Of those, 191 individuals (28.4%) reported not attending past chronic disease screening and stated: 1) *only seeing the doctor when they had a health problem* (n=140, 74.9%), 2) *believing that having chronic diseases is normal* (n=113, 66.5%) and 3) *neglecting or unable to remember to go for screening* (n=92, 52.9%) as their top three barriers. Those who reportedly attended chronic disease screening in the past (n=481, 71.6%) stated: 1) *worrying that diagnosis would affect career or employment* (n=123, 27.6%), 2) *screening results were not clearly explained* (n=83, 17.8%) and 3) *worrying that diagnosis would affect relationships* (n=82, 17.7%) as their top three barriers to attend post-screening follow-up.

Conclusion

With the barriers to chronic disease screening and follow-up identified in this study, future chronic disease screening programs and public education can be tailored for targeted outreach in our population.