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Primary prevention and health promotion for men

Executive Summary

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Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care
Im Mediapark 8 (KölnTurm)
50670 Cologne
Germany

Tel.: +49 (0)221 – 35685-0
Fax: +49 (0)221 – 35685-1
E-Mail: berichte@iqwig.de
Internet: www.iqwig.de

IQWiG employees:¹

- Andreas Waltering
- Roland Büchter
- Marco Knellingen
- Klaus Koch
- Siw Waffenschmidt
- Beate Zschorlich

¹ Due to legal data protection regulations, employees have the right not to be named.

Executive summary

Background

There are clear differences between men and women in terms of their state of health, their health behaviour, their exposure to health determinants and their life expectancy. Although awareness has increased, the importance of gender-specific differences in health is still often underestimated.

Research questions

The aim of this project was to evaluate the scientific evidence and to review the relevant qualitative literature on the topic of “primary prevention and health promotion for men” in accordance with the methods used by IQWiG to produce health information. Based on this expert research, health information (fact sheets) was to be produced on the topic of primary prevention measures and communication concerning health prevention within the context of age-specific health promotion for men. In addition, effective strategies for communicating information to men were to be identified. These strategies were also to be taken into consideration when producing the fact sheets.

Methods

In view of the planned production of evidence-based health information for consumers, high-quality systematic reviews and HTA reports based on prospective controlled trials were to be used. The results of qualitative research were analysed in order to gain access to subjective experiences, and to identify possible information needs and gaps. Separate systematic literature searches were carried out for each of these purposes. Relevant literature was identified using a multi-step selection process. Suitable trials were evaluated, and their findings were categorised and described according to topic.

Results

One systematic review on the topic of primary prevention measures and health promotion was identified. No valid conclusions could be drawn about the benefits and harms of interventions studied in the publications that were included in the systematic review. No publications concerning the communication of health information for men were found based on the inclusion criteria used. A literature search for qualitative studies on the topic of men’s information needs yielded 36 relevant studies. These studies described information needs in the following topic areas: “workplace/career”, “healthy lifestyle”, “diet”, “weight management”, “cardiovascular health”, “physical activity” and “use of addictive substances”. The studies showed that men would like to be informed of the possible benefits and risks of primary prevention interventions and the associated changes in behaviour or lifestyle. This was true for all of the above-mentioned topic areas.

Conclusion

The qualitative studies identified in this project show that men are interested in a wide range of primary prevention measures, both in their work and private lives.

However, we were unable to find suitable evidence concerning relevant primary prevention measures/health promotion interventions specifically for men, so it is not possible to produce health information on this topic in accordance with the methods used by IQWiG. There was a lack of systematic reviews and HTA reports or conclusive intervention studies that were both relevant and of sufficient quality. For this reason, it was also not possible to identify effective strategies for communicating information specifically to men.

Considering the large amount of health advice that men (and women) receive, the lack of suitable scientific research suggests that, overall, the advice is apparently not as scientifically founded as advice in other areas of medicine. The findings of this report provide an impetus to study primary prevention measures/health promotion strategies in good-quality trials, applying the same high scientific standards that are applied in research on other health-related interventions.

Keywords: Men's Health, Health Promotion, Health Information, Systematic Review

The full report (German version) is published under www.iqwig.de.