

Health status and factors perceived as influent in health by Portuguese adults

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Introduction and Aim

The knowledge about the factors perceived to have major influence in health and their relation with health status are determinant to the success of public health interventions.

Our **aim** was to compare health status' perception between Portuguese adults who identify different factors as main influences in health.

Participants and Methods

Data from the study "Portuguese Population's Food Habits and Lifestyles" were used. A national representative sample of 3529 subjects was interviewed at home between February and April 2009. The present analysis is carried out in 2835 subjects due to incompleteness of 694 records.

Subjects were asked to select from a list of nine, the two factors which had the greater importance in health (Kafatos et al. 1999). Health status was evaluated by the EQ-5D (Szende et al. 1997). The EQ visual analogue scale rates the subject's own assessment of their health status (0 = *worst imaginable health*; 100 = *best imaginable health*).

Health status' perception was compared between subjects who referred or not each of the factors with influence in health using independent-samples *t* tests and a univariate ANOVA.

Results and Discussion

More than half the sample (58%) considered "food" as one of the most important health determinants, followed by 28% who identified their health to be influenced by "stress" (Table 1).

Health status' perception was significantly different between subjects who referred or not each of the health determinants, except "drinking alcohol" (Table 2).

Indicating "food", "stress", "practicing exercise" or "smoking" as main influences in health was associated with higher health status' perception. On the contrary, "the weight", "the environment", "genetic factors" or "support from family and friends" were associated with lower health status' perception.

Considering all the nine factors in the ANOVA model (Table 3), the ones with significant influence in health status' perception were "food", "stress", "practicing exercise", "smoking" and "drinking alcohol". All these factors were associated with higher health status' perception.

The knowledge on factors perceived as major health determinants is useful to design effective health promotion interventions. This work contributes with the association between these factors and health status' perception, which may assist the use of motivational strategies in those interventions.

Table 1. Factors perceived as influent in health.

	YES %	NO %
Food	57.5	42.5
Stress	27.9	72.1
Practicing exercise	20.5	79.5
Smoking	19.5	80.5
The weight	15.6	84.4
The environment	13.5	86.5
Drinking alcohol	8.6	91.4
Genetic factors	10.3	89.7
The support from family and friends	5.9	94.1

Table 2. Health status' perception and factors perceived as influent in health (*t* tests).

	YES	NO	p
	EQ-VAS Mean (sd)	EQ-VAS Mean (sd)	
Food	77.8 (17.3)	74.1 (18.1)	< 0.001
Stress	78.2 (16.6)	75.4 (18.1)	< 0.001
Practicing exercise	83.1 (14.6)	74.4 (18.0)	< 0.001
Smoking	77.9 (17.5)	75.8 (17.8)	0.009
The weight	74.1 (17.5)	76.6 (17.8)	0.005
The environment	72.7 (17.4)	76.8 (17.7)	< 0.001
Drinking alcohol	76.9 (15.5)	76.1 (17.9)	0.486
Genetic factors	72.1 (16.0)	76.7 (17.9)	< 0.001
The support from family and friends	72.4 (17.6)	76.4 (17.7)	0.003

Table 3. Health status' perception and factors perceived as influent in health (ANOVA).

	YES	NO	p
	EQ-VAS Estimated marginal mean	EQ-VAS Estimated marginal mean	
Food	85.7	80.0	< 0.001
Stress	86.2	79.5	< 0.001
Practicing exercise	88.5	77.2	< 0.001
Smoking	85.5	80.3	< 0.001
The weight	83.4	82.4	0.318
The environment	82.7	83.1	0.737
Drinking alcohol	84.9	80.9	0.002
Genetic factors	82.7	83.1	0.734
The support from family and friends	81.7	84.1	0.112

References

- Kafatos A, Manios Y, Markatji I, Giachetti I, de Almeida MDV, Engstrom LM. Regional, demographic and national influences on attitudes and beliefs with regard to physical activity, body weight and health in nationally representative sample in the European Union. *Public Health Nutr* 1999; 2(1a): 87-95.
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