RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impact of Prevention Programs on Community Health in Greece

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ABSTRACT

Preventive health is one of the most important elements related to the well-being of society, and in recent years most countries have developed programs in this field. Public knowledge of these programs and their use by citizens are crucial to the extent to which they can ultimately contribute to improving the standard of living. The present study investigates the influence of these preventive health programs in Greece and examines both their benefits and the difficulties they continue to face, such as low public awareness, barriers to accessibility and varying levels of social acceptance. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to a substantial sample of people through a popular social networking site. The survey assessed participants' knowledge, awareness of availability and participation in important preventive measures, such as vaccinations, regular check-ups and programs that support both physical and mental well-being. The analysis identifies significant gaps in information dissemination and shows a moderate level of public engagement with the available prevention services. These results suggest that, although prevention programs have significantly positive effects on public health, their effectiveness continues to be limited by unequal use and insufficient outreach. This paper highlights the need for targeted communication strategies, as well as more extensive community-based interventions. To improve program uptake and achieve long-term population-level health outcomes, prevention education must be strengthened.

Keywords: prevention, community health, prevention programs, research, Greece, questionnaire, health improvement

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INTRODUCTION

Health is a fundamental human right and can undoubtedly function as a key prerequisite for the well-being and cohesion of a society. As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), health is not simply identified with the absence of disease, but includes the overall state of physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1948). Within this context, prevention programs play a leading role in promoting public health, seeking to reduce risk factors and improve overall quality of life.

Prevention programs are categorized into three fundamental levels. The first, primary prevention, focuses on preventing the onset of disease through measures such as vaccinations and the encouragement of healthy habits across the entire population (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008). Next comes secondary prevention, which includes screening and diagnostic procedures designed for early disease detection and timely intervention (Tones & Tilford, 2001; Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008). The final level, tertiary prevention, focuses on the management of long-term conditions and on supporting recovery and rehabilitation (Naidoo & Wills, 2016). The importance of prevention goes beyond merely reducing healthcare costs; it also plays a key role in ensuring equal access to essential health services for all. In Greece, in alignment with global public health initiatives, national prevention programs are implemented to address critical issues of both national and international interest. These include initiatives such as vaccination campaigns, cancer prevention, addressing obesity and smoking, and promoting mental health. The effectiveness of these programs, however, depends largely on public awareness, understanding and willingness to adopt them. This highlights the need to explore citizens' attitudes and their degree of participation in these preventive efforts.

The aim of the present study is to examine the impact of prevention programs on communities in Greece, highlighting their effectiveness while also identifying areas requiring improvement in order to strengthen overall public health. The study then proceeds to present the findings of the survey that was conducted.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The purpose of the present paper is to present the results regarding the extent to which the public is aware of health prevention programs in Greece. The first questions cover the demographic section, which is analyzed later in the paper, while the following questions examine whether there is knowledge of these programs, whether they are used and how they are evaluated.

Data Collection

The Google Drive platform, through Google Forms, was used to create and maintain the questionnaire. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed through a social media platform (Instagram) to a broad audience.

Study Sample

The questionnaire was published from 2/11/2024 to 3/11/2024 and collected 8,685 responses. The largest percentage of respondents were women (95%), while the most common age group among participants was 18-25 years (3,117 individuals), followed by the 26-30 age group (2,076). In addition, the majority live in a city (72%), while 40% of those who responded hold an AEI/TEI degree and 19% hold a postgraduate degree.

Based on the analysis of the demographic data, it is important to note that, among the employment sectors of the respondents, the health, food service and education sectors included the largest numbers of individuals. In the next part of the questionnaire, certain questions concerned participants' knowledge of the programs. Of the 8685 respondents, 2,934 did not know what these programs are, corresponding to 33%; in other words, the reason why those who had not used a program had not done so was that they were unaware of it. This therefore indicates a lack of public information.

It is also important to point out that only 46 of the 2,927 individuals who did not know about the programs did not wish to receive further information; therefore, there is a need for information. Of these respondents, 57% believe that the Greek health system acts as an obstacle to their development. This is also immediately evident from the fact that the average rating of information about the programs is 3 (on a 5-point scale), while it is worth emphasizing that social media play a major role in informing people about these programs, since those who know about them learned about them through social media. Regardless of the fact that they become known through mass media, it is very encouraging that everyone understands the importance of initially promoting the programs properly in schools and subsequently in public spaces, while the best-known program among the public is the one for the prevention of cervical cancer. Finally, the results show that most responses given by individuals who participated in the survey, although they knew about the programs, indicated that they had not used any of them. This can be considered relatively reasonable when the ages of the respondents are taken into account.

Statistical Analysis

After the responses were collected, the data were analyzed using SPSS software and the final findings were produced. At the beginning, a Cronbach analysis was performed to test the reliability of the results. The value of 0.807 indicates highly reliable results. Pearson techniques and correspondence analysis were used for the analysis

of correlations. Correspondence analysis is a descriptive, exploratory and non-parametric method that depicts relationships between variables in a multidimensional space.

RESULTS

The survey reveals that, although 33% of participants report that they do not know about health prevention programs, there is notable interest in obtaining more comprehensive information. Among the 2934 individuals who admitted that they lacked knowledge on the subject, only 46 expressed no interest in learning more, highlighting the public's strong desire for better awareness and participation in preventive healthcare. However, 57% of respondents perceive the Greek healthcare system as an obstacle to the progress of prevention, citing issues such as bureaucracy, inadequate infrastructure and limited access to effective services. The average score for the quality of information is 3 out of 5, suggesting that the information provided is considered insufficient. While the media play a key role in raising awareness, the findings also indicate the need for a more structured and coherent promotion strategy. It is encouraging that respondents support the integration of prevention education in schools and public spaces, with the aim of raising awareness from a young age. Integrating prevention programs into basic knowledge could significantly improve public health by enabling individuals to make informed decisions about their well-being.

In addition, the results obtained from the questionnaire show that perceptions of the importance and usefulness of prevention programs significantly influence their evaluation. Participants who judge these programs as valuable for individual and social well-being evaluate them more positively, which indicates that they are more likely to participate in them. The high scores given to questions concerning the organization and quality of the programs are associated with the perception that prevention has a meaningful impact on health, emphasizing the need to improve participants' perception of the social dimension of preventive medicine, even when there is not always full awareness of their social usefulness.

Although most participants appreciate the value of the programs, there is still a lack of public information, which could be strengthened through educational and communication initiatives.

The analysis also showed that participants' age plays a role in knowledge and use of the programs. Younger age groups (18–35 years) show lower levels of awareness and participation in the programs, while older age groups (36–50 years) appear to know more and to use specific programs. Therefore, there is a need to create information strategies that will reach younger audiences more directly, possibly through the use of digital channels and media with which they are already familiar, with the main aim of improving participation and overall awareness of health prevention programs.

Selected results from the Pearson test for correlation analysis are presented, followed by the correspondence analysis diagrams.

The Pearson Correlation is therefore observed for each combination, and in every case the value is statistically significant, since the sig. value is <0.05 (0 throughout), indicating a positive correlation (as it is close to 1).

In practice, this means that when someone considers a program more useful for society, they also perceive it as equally important for themselves and evaluate it positively both in terms of organization and in a more general context. However, it is found that, overall, there is not such a strong positive correlation between how useful it is perceived to be and how it is evaluated (0.357 and 0.337), based on Table 1. This is reasonable, since respondents may have other personal criteria for evaluating the programs beyond their perceived importance.

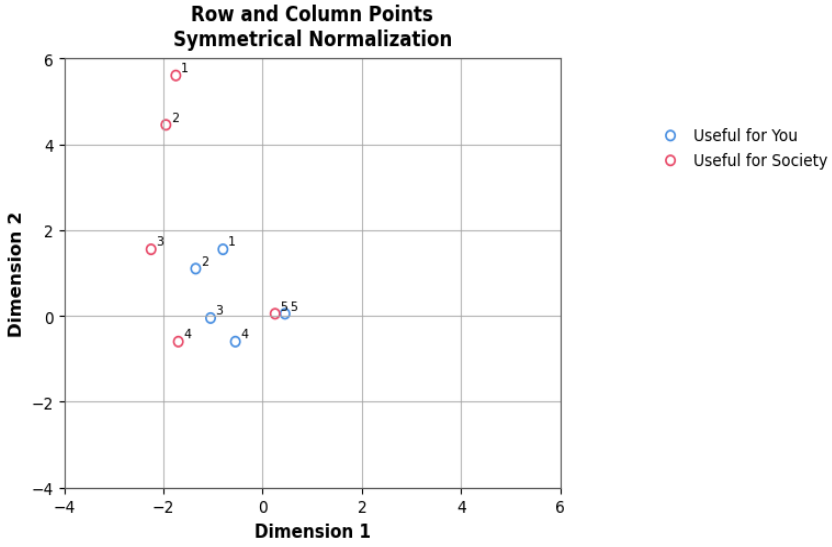
Table 1. Pearson Correlations

		Useful for You	Useful for Society	Program Organization	Evaluation
Useful for You	Pearson Correlation	1	.802**	.785**	.357**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	8684	8684	8684	8684
Useful for Society	Pearson Correlation	.802**	1	.873**	.337**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	8684	8684	8684	8684
Program Organization	Pearson Correlation	.785**	.873**	1	.449**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	8684	8684	8684	8684
Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.357**	.337**	.449**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	8684	8684	8684	8684

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1 shows the correspondence analysis regarding how useful participants perceive the programs to be both for themselves and for society. It was noted that those who perceive the importance of the programs for society (5 red) also perceive their importance for themselves (5 blue), because the points on the graph are very close. Similarly, those who perceive the programs as important for themselves (4 blue) state that their importance for society is moderate to high (3 and 4 red).

Figure 1. Correlation of respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of programs for themselves (blue) and for society (red) (1 = little, 5 = very much).



DISCUSSION

The findings of the study provide valuable information about the participants' background, particularly with regard to their occupational sector and level of education. A significant percentage of respondents are employed in sectors such as healthcare, food service and education, which collectively account for the majority of the sample. This distribution could suggest increased awareness of health issues in these sectors—especially among healthcare professionals who are directly involved in prevention efforts. In addition, the presence of participants from the food service and education sectors may underline the critical role of promoting health awareness in settings characterized by regular social interaction.

With regard to educational level, most participants hold a university or technical degree, with a notable percentage having completed postgraduate studies or vocational training at IEK institutes. This suggests that the overall educational level of the sample is relatively high, potentially making participants more receptive to information and participation in health prevention programs. Nevertheless, despite this strong educational background, the data reveal that many workers still do not have sufficient knowledge of the existing programs. This indicates the need to implement targeted informational initiatives—not only to raise awareness but also to enhance the accessibility and understanding of such programs, thereby better addressing the public's needs regarding health prevention.

Furthermore, the results show that participants' perception of the importance and usefulness of prevention programs plays a decisive role in how they evaluate them. Those who consider these programs essential for personal and social well-being tend to evaluate them more favorably and show greater willingness to participate. A positive evaluation of the structure and quality of the programs is closely linked to the belief that prevention has a meaningful impact on health. This highlights the importance of strengthening the public's understanding of the broader social value of preventive medicine, even when there is not full awareness of its social benefits.

While most participants recognize the personal benefits of prevention programs, awareness of their broader social impact remains limited—an area that could be strengthened through targeted educational and communication efforts. The analysis also revealed that age influences both familiarity with and participation in these programs. Younger individuals (aged 18–35) tend

to show lower levels of awareness and participation, while older participants (aged 36–50) are generally more informed and actively participate in specific programs. These results underline the importance of developing tailored strategies to better engage younger audiences—possibly by leveraging mobile-friendly digital platforms that they frequently use—with the aim of increasing participation and improving overall awareness of health prevention efforts.

Older citizens appear to have greater awareness and recognition of the value of prevention programs, and they may not be influenced by digital media to the same extent. Therefore, it is important to develop tailored information campaigns that respond to the specific needs and preferences of each age group, with the aim of increasing participation and improving understanding of prevention actions across all social strata.

CONCLUSIONS

The health prevention initiatives that have been established in Greece address a wide range of issues with the aim of maintaining and improving public health. These programs include efforts to prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, vaccination campaigns, mental health support and disease prevention, as well as health promotion activities in workplaces and schools.

In this study, all current prevention initiatives in Greece are presented and a survey was created to determine public awareness and use. A total of 8,685 responses were collected for analysis.

However, the results show that a significant part of the population is not well informed or does not use these programs, suggesting that they have not yet been widely disseminated or made accessible to all age groups and social groups. This contrasts with the fact that important occupational sectors—such as healthcare and education—show a strong need and interest in information about prevention.

Only 46 of the 2,927 participants with no prior knowledge stated that they had no desire to learn more about health prevention programs. Fifty-seven percent of respondents believe that the Greek health system hinders the promotion of prevention initiatives, despite the fact that mass media constitute an important dissemination channel. It is also emphasized that there is room for improvement, as demonstrated by the average score for the information currently available, which is 3 out of 5. Participants generally agree that it is critical to promote such initiatives in public spaces and schools, as they have the potential to significantly increase public awareness and acceptance of preventive healthcare.

In addition, a large proportion of survey respondents appear to recognize the importance of prevention programs because they have a higher educational level and work in professions that directly support public health. Nevertheless, there is a marked difference in knowledge between younger and older people, as well as in how each individual and society views their use. Although social media have a positive effect on young people's knowledge, the fact that these groups rarely use prevention programs suggests that knowledge alone is not sufficient for active participation.

In summary, although health prevention programs in Greece make an important contribution to strengthening public health, there is a clear need for improvements in communication, accessibility and public awareness. The importance of prevention at both the personal and social level could be strengthened through communication channels that successfully target specific age groups and occupational sectors. Such strategic efforts can play a key role in cultivating a stronger culture of prevention in Greece and in promoting improved health outcomes for the broader population.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

The impact of prevention programs on community health

This questionnaire was created for the purpose of conducting research that forms part of the postgraduate thesis of postgraduate students Anna Dimitrakaki & Stella Passari. Thank you in advance for your time!

In 2024, in an era when everything is "moving" around us, individual health should be one of the main obligations for each of us. Prevention programs aim at all areas of citizens' health, providing valid identification of the main chronic diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and others, which are increasingly developing in our country.

* Indicates required question

Demographic Data

1. Gender *

Only one answer may be selected.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other
- ◯ I prefer not to answer

2. Age *

Choose only one answer.

- ◯ 18 - 25
- ◯ 26 - 30
- ◯ 31 - 35
- ◯ 36 - 40
- ◯ 41 - 50
- ◯ 51 - 60
- ◯ > 60

3. Place of residence *

Choose only one answer.

- ◯ Village
- ◯ Town
- ◯ City
- ◯ Island

4. Employment status (you may select more than one)

Select all that apply.

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Full-time employment
- ☐ Part-time employment
- ☐ Freelancer
- ☐ Unemployed

5. Employment sector (e.g., food service, health, etc.) *

6. Educational Level *

Select only one answer.

- ◯ General Lyceum graduate
- ◯ Vocational Lyceum graduate
- ◯ University/TEI graduate
- ◯ IEK graduate
- ◯ Master's degree holder
- ◯ Doctoral degree holder
- ◯ Other: _____

7. Do you know what health prevention programs are? *

Select only one answer.

- ◯ YES Skip and go to question 8
- ◯ NO Skip and go to question 15

Health Prevention Programs

Health Prevention Programs

8. Where did you hear about them?

Select only one answer.

- ◯ Social media
- ◯ From my doctor
- ◯ Family
- ◯ Friends
- ◯ Work environment

9. Which of the following programs are you aware of?

Select all that apply.

- [ ] National Program for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer
- [ ] National Program for the Prevention of Breast Cancer
- [ ] National Program for the Prevention of Colorectal Cancer
- [ ] Child and Adolescent Health Prevention Program
- [ ] Program for the Prevention and Management of Cardiovascular Diseases
- [ ] Skin Cancer Prevention Program

10. Which of the above programs have you used?

Select all that apply.

- [ ] National Program for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer
- [ ] National Program for the Prevention of Breast Cancer
- [ ] National Program for the Prevention of Colorectal Cancer
- [ ] Child and Adolescent Health Prevention Program
- [ ] Program for the Prevention and Management of Cardiovascular Diseases
- [ ] Skin Cancer Prevention Program
- [ ] None of the above

11. How useful do you think it was for you?

Select only one answer.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	○	○	○	○	○	Very high

12. How useful do you think it is for society?

Choose only one answer.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Little	○	○	○	○	○	**Very much**

13. How organized do you find the existing programs?

Choose only one answer.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Little	○	○	○	○	○	**Very much**

14. How positively do you believe they affect society?

Choose only one answer.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Little	○	○	○	○	○	**Very much**

Skip to and go to question 19

15. **If you have never used any program, what was the reason?**

Choose only one answer.

- ◯ I did not know about them
- ◯ I am not interested
- ◯ I forgot

16. Would you be interested in learning more information about prevention programs?

Select only one answer.

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

17. Do you believe there is any benefit to society from prevention programs?

Select only one answer.

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

18. Does the Greek health system hinder the development of prevention programs?

Select only one answer.

- ◯ YES
- ◯ NO

Information

19. How do you rate information about the programs?

Select only one answer.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very high

20. Ways to improve the programs:

Select all that apply.

- ☐ Better information in schools
- ☐ Information campaigns for the public (e.g., in public spaces)
- ☐ Information campaigns in workplaces
- ☐ Better promotion through social media
- ☐ Expansion of programs to cover more conditions