Abstract

Background: Health education on the part of primary care physicians has been shown to improve the health of the population, but, generally speaking, physicians are not pursuing this to the recommended degree. The end purpose of this study is that of ascertaining what factors have an influence on health education being carried out by primary care physicians in Galicia (Spain), how they perceive their training in this regard, what obstacles they encounter as regards to providing this education and how the existence of unhealthy habits on the part of the physician has a bearing on carrying out this activity. Methods: A cross-sectional study has been conducted. A previously-tested, self-answer mail-out questionnaire was sent to a random sample stratified by provinces of 420 primary care physicians from the «Servicio Galego de Saúde» (Galician Health Care Service). A comparative analysis was made with those who failed to reply. The main analysis of the data was conducted by means of a multivariate (logic regression) analysis. Results: Seventy-three percent (73%) of the replies were valid, without any differences among strata. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the physicians surveyed considered their training in health education to be insufficient, being better among family doctors and among those who had taken courses specifically devoted to this subject. The main obstacle reported was the lack of time. 38.4% of the physicians reported that they carry out health education, an activity related to the female gender (Odds Ratio 1.70), better training concerning this subject (Odds Ratio 2.20) and a better personally perceived ability to carry out the same (Odds Ratio 1.32). No relationship was found to exist between the carrying out of health education and the existence of unhealthy habits. Conclusions: Being female, feeling efficient at providing health education and considering oneself to be well-trained regarding this subject being related positively to this activity being carried out by primary care physicians, solely one third of whom report doing so.

Keywords

Educating for health. Primary care.