Practice of habitual and volitional health behaviors to prevent severe acute respiratory syndrome among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Purpose: To explore factors relating to the practice of habitual and volitional health behaviors against the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong.

Methods: A community telephone survey was conducted with 230 Chinese adolescents. Random-digit dialing of the local residential telephone directory was used to select respondents, who were asked to provide information on their practice of SARS preventive health behaviors and associated factors as specified by the Health Belief Model. These factors included perceived threat of SARS, perceived benefits and barriers in practicing SARS preventive health behaviors, cues to action, knowledge of SARS, and self-efficacy. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine salient correlates of habitual and volitional health behaviors against SARS.

Results: About 54.8% of respondents reported practicing all three recommended habitual health behaviors. Another 47.8% indicated consistent practice of volitional health behavior of facemask-wearing to prevent SARS. Results of hierarchical regression analyses showed that habitual health behaviors against SARS were related to perceived health threat and environmental cues. For facemask-wearing, salient correlates were environmental cues, rates of SARS habitual health behaviors, younger age, and perceived health threat.

Conclusions: The Health Belief Model is useful in understanding Chinese adolescents' practice of health behaviors, especially volitional health behaviors.