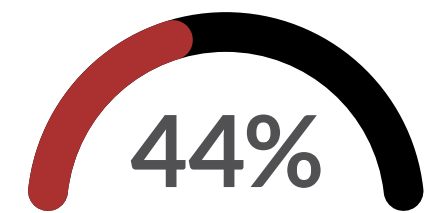


Perceptions of Exercise Behaviors in Firefighters: An Application of the Health Belief Model

Why are firefighters inactive when occupational performance relies heavily on fitness levels?



The leading cause of death in firefighters while on-duty is sudden cardiac death.

INCREASED RISK OF ADVERSE CARDIAC EVENTS DUE TO INCREASED PREVALENCE OF...

- Sedentary behavior
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity
- Lower levels of cardiorespiratory fitness

HEALTH BELIEF MODEL

Compared perceptions of exercise behaviors between career and volunteer firefighters from South Dakota



PERCIEVED BENEFITS

Health advantages of everyday activity, chronic disease control, and weight management

OBJECTIVE BARRIERS

Lack of time
Limited facility or equipment access
Exercise modality
Availability or preference of workout partners

SUBJECTIVE BARRIERS

Individual's lack of motivation, benefits, and fear of pain related to exercise

SEVERITY

Increased risk of chronic disease and weight gain

SELF-EFFICACY

Confidence in their ability to exercise with their identified barriers

CUES TO ACTION

Friends, family, and doctor's influence on their exercise behaviors

Understanding these barriers is the first step toward addressing them.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The HBM constructs of subjective barriers and perceived severity were significant predictors of engaging in exercise within the full sample, accounting for 19% of the variance in exercise engagement.

CAREER FIREFIGHTERS

- Higher perceived severity and self-efficacy levels
- Lower subjective and objective barriers
- Greater beliefs in the importance of exercise to reduce severity of future health risk factors
- Significantly lower BMI than the volunteer group

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

- Reported significantly higher objective and subjective barriers such as time management and ambivalence, which are significant predictors to not being healthy or active.

WHAT'S NEXT?

A study found that firefighters who received wellness programming experienced lower rates of obesity, improved endurance levels, higher VO2max, reduced likelihood of tobacco use, lower anxiety levels, and improved job satisfaction, when provided access to equipment, health experts, and workout sessions in the occupational setting itself.

Importance of wellness fitness initiatives in fire departments: exercise benefits, weight management, and prevention of chronic disease.

Strategies to overcome subjective and objective barriers consist of providing accountability for those who feel unmotivated, educating on the benefits to exercise, and implementing effective time management techniques.

