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Family history, genetics services, and cancer risk perception at Brazilian unified health system

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In this cross-sectional study, we surveyed Brazilian unified health system users with personal and/or family cancer history to know their risk perception; opinion regarding cancer causes; accomplishment of preventive exams; and interest in cancer genetics services. After IRB approval participants answered a semi-structured questionnaire regarding sociodemographic variables, family history, risk perception, access to information, resources and accomplishment of preventive exams; and interest in genetic services. At primary care, 2,441 medical records were assessed, totaling 238 families (23.5%), and 23 individuals were interviewed. Most respondents (69.6%) were female with average age of 66.5 years. They considered that their cancer risk was zero or very low. The majority didn't know what the causes of cancer were, but the emotional/psychological aspects were mentioned, 56.5% have no interest in learning more about the risks for cancer, 69.6% would perform a blood test to determine their predisposition to hereditary cancer. At a tertiary service, it was applied to 51 patients at an outpatient cancer genetic counseling clinic, most of them considered their own risk as the same of the general population, independently of their cancer history. Psychological/emotional factors were also considered the main cancer cause. Women believe more that genetics has a strongest effect on cancer risk (c21=5,38, p=0,02). Family history of cancer had no effect on cancer screening behaviors, and they expressed interest in obtaining more information about cancer genetic counseling. The study provided information regarding cancer management on that population, related to cancer prevention, early detection, and diagnostic resources, focused on health promotion.

Biography

Milena Floria-Santos completed her Ph.D. at the School of Medicine of Ribeirao Preto, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil and postdoctoral studies from The University of Iowa College of Nursing, funded by Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health. She has been involved with Genetics/Genomics Nursing for 19 years, with a specific interest on cancer genetics. She has a strong background in clinical genetics and molecular biology lab research. At her clinical research she provides comprehensive genetic cancer risk assessment (genetic counseling, psychosocial support, prevention, and management recommendations) within a multidisciplinary team at a well-recognized Brazilian cancer center.

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