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Title

Public Perception of Conflict Among Experts Around Health Recommendations and Corresponding Trust in Health Experts

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Patient Education/Adherence

Presenters

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Abstract

Context Public trust in health experts has been decreasing, leading to decreased adherence to expert recommendations.

Objective To evaluate public perceptions of uncertainty and disagreement among experts in healthcare recommendations and whether it is associated with decreased trust in health entities as providers of accurate health information.

Design, Setting, and Participants A cross-sectional analysis of the US nationally representative Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS 6—2022). Adults aged 18 and older were respondents to the survey (unweighted n=5842, representing 241 million adults).

Main Outcomes and Measures Trust in different experts, doctors, scientists and government health agencies for health information. Analyses examined trust in experts with public perceptions of uncertainty among experts (conflict about recommendations; recommendations constantly changing).

Results There was high trust in doctors as sources of health information is 95% while 84% had high trust in scientists and only 70% in government health agencies. Only 18% have high trust in the health information on social media. There was no significant relationship between perceptions of uncertainty among experts and trust in doctors ($p>.05$). Respondents who felt expert recommendations change often were less likely to have high trust (65%) in government agencies compared to those who felt that the recommendations didn't often change (82%) ($p<.01$). In logistic regressions controlling for age, sex, race, education, income and trust in social media for health information, perceptions of low conflict among expert health recommendations is associated with likelihood of high trust in government health agencies (OR 2.86; 95% CI 1.96--4.15).

Conclusions and Relevance The US adult population has low trust in government health agencies and perceptions of uncertainty and disagreement among experts over recommendations is likely playing a role in the erosion of trust in health experts.

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