Knowledge, Perceptions, and Behaviours Related to Radon Counselling by Family Medicine Practitioners and Residents in Toronto, Canada

Background:
Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada, causing approximately 1,800 deaths yearly. In 2007, the Canadian guideline for residential radon exposure was decreased from 800 Bq/m3 to 200 Bq/m3.

Objectives:
The Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) was used as a framework for understanding physicians’ perceptions about the threat of radon to patients’ health, efficacy of methods for mitigating personal risk, and intentions for counselling patients about radon.

Methods:
In April 2012, medical residents and faculty of the University of Toronto’s Department of Family and Community Medicine completed an online questionnaire designed to measure components of the EPPM using the Risk Behaviour Diagnosis (RBD) Scale.

Results:
57 residents and 41 faculty completed the survey. Although only 18% of respondents had read educational materials about the new guidelines, general knowledge about radon was very good. Twenty-nine percent of respondents were classified by the RBD Scale as perceiving high radon threat and high efficacy of intervention; this group was more likely to plan to increase their knowledge about radon, to counsel patients about the health risks of radon, and to acquire related education materials for patients, when compared to those perceiving low threat and/or low efficacy.

Conclusions:
Family medicine practitioners’ intentions to adopt positive behaviours for radon counselling are influenced by their perceptions about the threat of radon to patients’ health and the efficacy of methods to mitigate risk.

What are the implications of your research on practice or policy?
These findings may help to improve strategies for decreasing health risks related to radon exposure by clarifying the impact of physicians’ perceptions on intentions to counsel.