DVT/PE Awareness and Knowledge Gaps in the General Public

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Background

- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) impose a major public health burden in the United States, affecting an estimated 350,000 to 600,000 individuals and accounting for ~100,000 deaths each year, according to *The Surgeon General's Call To Action to Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis and Pulmonary Embolism* (2008).¹
- According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mortality data (2006), only deaths from heart disease and cancer surpass deaths from PE.

Objectives

- The National Blood Clot Alliance, a patient led advocacy group dedicated to promoting patient and public awareness about the signs and symptoms of DVT and PE, implemented this survey to:
- Benchmark DVT/PE awareness gaps among the general public
- Bridge these gaps with information that will bring about increased awareness and optimal adherence to evidence-based strategies for optimal DVT prophylaxis

Methods

- This DVT/PE awareness survey was conducted by the national survey firm USA/Direct, Inc., among a representative cross-section of 500 adults, ≥ 20 years, 64% female, screened from online research panels.
- Little information about the public's knowledge of venous thromboembolism is found in the literature, making this one of the most comprehensive, relatively large surveys of its kind.

Results

Awareness/Knowledge of DVT/PE	National Sample (n=500)
Do you know what a blood clot is?	82%
Have you heard of a condition called "DVT"?	21%
Have you heard of a condition called "PE"?	16%
Have you heard of a condition called VTE?	9%
Have you heard of venous thromboembolism?	15%
Correctly identified what thrombophilia means?*	23%
Correctly identified what thrombosis means?*	41%
Have you ever had a blood clot in leg or lung?	13%
Family member with blood clot in leg or lung?	29%
Respondents understand term "blood clot." bu	ıt have

Respondents understand term "blood clot," but have little awareness of medical abbreviations for thrombosis

Nearly 1/3 at risk due to family history of blood clots and 13% at risk due to previous blood clots

*correctly identified from a choice of definitions

Awareness/Knowledge of DVT/PE	National Sample
Those who heard of DVT identified it correctly	86% n=104
Those who had <u>not</u> heard of DVT, when defined for them, said they understood meaning	29% n=411
Those who heard of PE identified it correctly	83% n=80
Of those who had <u>not</u> heard of PE, when defined for them, said they knew meaning	47% n=434
Of those who know/claim to know what a PE correctly identified it from list of terms	74% n=268
Of those who said they understood term, 15% to 30% could not identify it correctly	
When defined for those who did not understand,	

~50% or less understood the definition

n = question base

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Awareness of DVT Signs & Symptoms	National Sample
Those aware of DVT could name risk factors	53% n=206
Those who know or claim to know what PE is could name signs & symptoms	34% n=68
There are ample opportunities for improved awareness related to medical terms, risk factors, and signs/symptoms	

n = question base

National

Sample

(490)

4	
Leading Factors to Cause "Blood Clots"	National Sample (N=490)
Family history of blood clots	73%
Major trauma	71%
Major surgery	69%
Being bedridden	68%
Extended immobility	63%
Long car / plane trips	56.9%
Smoking, HBP, old age, OCs, pregnancy, hospitalization, cancer, hormones, chemo	< 60 %
There are gaps that can be filled to optimize	

public awareness about risk factors

Awareness/Knowledge of Seriousness of "Blood Clots"

Can be life threatening 98%
Can interfere with blood flow 97%
Can travel to other parts of body 92%
Can occur without warning 94%
Can result in loss of limb 73%
Respondents demonstrate high awareness of thrombosis

health risks when term "blood clot" is used

Conclusion

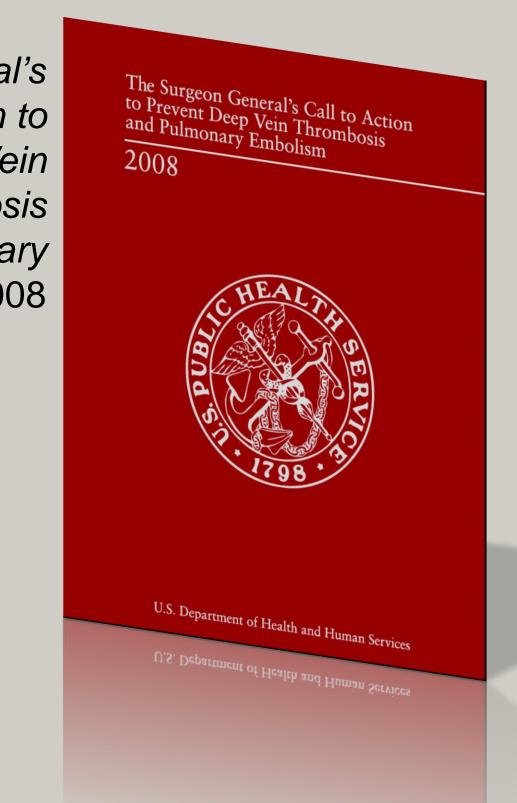
- The public health impact of DVT/PE is significant, while DVT/PE public awareness, including awareness of important DVT/PE risk factors and signs/symptoms, is disproportionately low.
- These survey data support recommendations in the Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent DVT/PE, underscoring the urgent need for education, especially the use of simplified terms, to close gaps in DVT/PE public awareness/knowledge and can help guide educational initiatives relative to DVT/PE that may contribute to decreased morbidity and mortality.

Future Directions

Advocacy and public health groups should consciously decide how the public should be educated about thrombosis-related terminology: How to educate? What is the cost of education? What is the value of education?

References

1. Surgeon General's
Call To Action to
Prevent Deep Vein
Thrombosis
and Pulmonary
Embolism, 2008



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