

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

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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," 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

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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

3

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

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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	

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Awareness/Knowledge of Seriousness of "Blood Clots"	National Sample (490)
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

