

Health information provision, health knowledge and health behaviors: Evidence from breast cancer screening

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Many public health interventions aim to provide individuals with health information on the consequences of behaviors such as smoking, alcohol consumption or preventive care use, with the intention of changing health behavior through better health knowledge. This paper examines whether the provision of health information in organized breast cancer screening programs affects mammography utilizations via changes in health knowledge. We use unique data from the Eurobarometer survey collected in 1997/1998, and we exploit variation in the introduction and coverage of organized breast cancer screening programs for causal identification in a difference-in-differences design. We find that health information provision improves health knowledge. Yet, these changes in health knowledge had little to no effects on mammography utilization in the overall population. However, there is considerable heterogeneity by education, and our findings suggest that health information provision has a stronger effect on health behavior change among lower educated women.