

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES IN TURKISH NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

Newspapers are designed to be appealed by people at different cultural levels and newspapers are very useful for health education if they are correctly used. According to data compiled by Turkish Statistical Institute in 2011, cardiovascular diseases are number one cause of death (% 39.9) in our country. Our study is designed to evaluate cardiovascular diseases in Turkish Newspapers in the light of this information.

Total newspaper circulation of 33 newspapers-except sports newspapers- is 4.177.135. In the ranking, first 4 newspapers are 2.188.338 daily and they constitute of 52.4 percent of total circulation. All the news about cardiovascular diseases are analyzed (n: 241) between January-June 2012.

188 news items of total 214 news items (78.0%) contain protecting advices against cardiovascular diseases. 136 (%72.3) of these advices contain “increasing physical activity, preventing obesity, tobacco control, avoiding climate and sudden emotional changes”. Remaining 52 (27.7%) news contains nutrition suggestions (various plants, herbal tea, coffee, chocolate, reducing salt intake) and also advise to avoid chronic fatigue, protecting drugs and electromagnetic areas.

53 news items of total 241 news items (22 %) are consisted of innovations in medicine (n: 13), newly-opened cardiovascular centers (n: 10), traditional treatment methods (n: 7), personal cardiovascular health problems of famous

people (n: 18) and other sensational news such as “Betrayal causes cardiomyopathy” and etc.

Newspapers present scientific innovations with popular explanations in a way public can understand. Concerned people should convey correct, sufficient and usable information on time to the press member for more valuable health education.

Keywords: Newspaper, cardiovascular disease, health news

Introduction

News items are the events, opinions and judgments that interest lots of people in a society. Mass media that presents news in an understandable language expand people's horizons and increase their enthusiasm toward learning new things. Newspapers that make up a significant part of a printed media are prepared in such a way that they draw the attention of people from different social and cultural levels.

In health services, primary prevention comprises health promotion and specific protection. Both of the steps require social awareness and health protection culture (Jekel, et al., 2001). Popular and qualified newspapers can be very good instruments in health education thereby health promotion by avoiding sensation and referring scientifically correct information (İnce and İnce, 2001). One of the scales to assess news in printed media is Budd score. This method, which is first used in 1930 in England and then edited by Kartoglu, scores news by looking page number of a new, length of a title, whether a new is a hot subject if it is on the first page, location of a new on the page and how much space does it take (İnce and İnce, 2001). In one of the study, which is conducted by IYA group in 2009 in order to assess news about astronomy and space science in newspapers, news are scored according to quality and popularity of newspapers, date of publication, title of new, location of news (whether it is in the first three pages or not), accompanying picture, photo or graphs, source of information, the individual who give the information (whether he is scientist or not), name of scientist, jargon and references that are used in new and potential outcome of news (IYA Evaluation Special Task Group, March 2009).

According to the data compiled by Turkish Statistical Institute in 2011, cardiovascular diseases are number one cause of death (% 39.9) in our country (TUIK, 2011). Therefore, preventing cardiovascular diseases in terms of public

health is the first priority of our country. Turkish Republic ministry of health performs national programs in order to control cardiovascular diseases such as tobacco control (smoking cessation), obesity prevention, and increasing physical activity (TürkiyeHalkSağlığıKurumu, 2012).

This study is conducted in order to assess the news about cardiovascular diseases and the impact of the news on preventative public health applications.

Method and Materials

This study is conducted between January-June 2012 in descriptive methods. In this period, total newspaper circulation of 33 newspapers-except sports newspapers- is 4.177.135. In the ranking, first 4 newspapers are 2.188.338 daily and they constitute of 52.4 percent of total circulation. All the news about cardiovascular diseases are analyzed (n: 241) between January-June 2012. In this process, news items are analyzed in two ways.

Firstly, all the news items are analyzed by first author in order to protect standardization. The news that contains “cardiovascular disease” word or word group is separated according to their major advice content. These major tips are;

- protective advices (increasing physical activities, obesity prevention, tobacco control, protecting from extreme hot and cold, stress and emotional changes, eating habits, various plants, tea, coffee, chocolate, decreasing consumption of salt)
- innovations in medicine in terms of cardiovascular diseases,
- new treatment centers,
- traditional treatment methods,
- celebrities with cardiovascular diseases,
- sensational news about cardiovascular diseases.

Secondly, the secondary tips are identified in each news items since one news may contain more than one advice. In addition, identity of a news (whether it is accompanied by a picture, whether there is a name of a reporter, whether there is an expert opinion or reference) is analyzed.

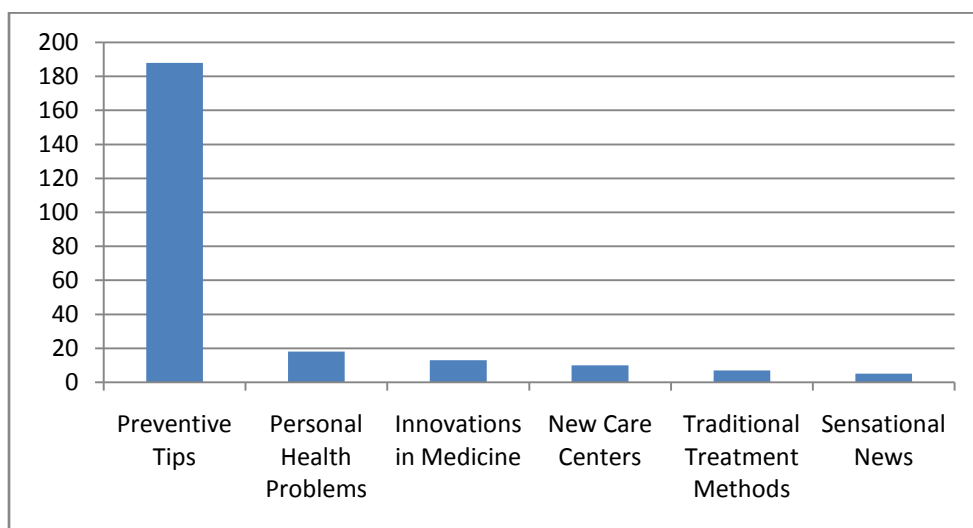
Data are defined with SPSS program in terms of frequencies and percentage. Chi square test is used for categorical variable analysis. P-value for statistical significance is defined as below 0.05.

Results

188 news items of total 214 news items (78.0%) contain protecting tips against cardiovascular diseases. 136 (%72.3) of these advises “increasing physical activity,

preventing obesity, tobacco control, avoiding climate and sudden emotional changes”. Remaining 52 (27.7%) news contains nutrition suggestions (various plants, herbal tea, coffee, chocolate, reducing salt intake) and also advise to avoid chronic fatigue, protecting drugs and electromagnetic areas.

53 news items of total 241 news items (22 %) are consisted of innovations in medicine (n: 13), newly-opened cardiovascular centers (n: 10), traditional treatment methods (n: 7), personal cardiovascular health problems of famous people (n: 18) and other sensational news such as “Betrayal causes cardiomyopathy”, “First by-pass operation then cup in the salsa competition” (Graph1).



Graph 1. Distribution of the news items in terms of primary tips.

The analysis of identity of news is summarized in table 1.

Tablo 1. Detailed analysis of the news items.

Identity of News	n	%
Reporter		
<i>Name</i>	55	22,8
<i>No Name</i>	186	77,2
Expert Opinion		
<i>Yes</i>	162	67,2

<i>No</i>	79	32,8
Reference		
<i>Yes</i>	52	21,6
<i>No</i>	189	78,4
Photo		
<i>Yes</i>	171	71,0
<i>No</i>	70	29,0

The number of the news that contain an expert opinion and a reference is found as 17 (%7), while the number of the news that contain none of them is found as 44 (%18,3).

The number of the news that do not contain a reporter's name, an expert opinion and a reference is found as 34 (%14,1).

14 news items of total 241 news items are related to innovations in medicine. 10 news items of total 241 news items are related to new cardiovascular care centers. 18 news items of total 241 news items are related to celebrities with cardiovascular health problems.

The news items which contain preventative tips for cardiovascular diseases are summarized in table 2.

Table 2. Tips for preventing cardiovascular diseases.

Tips	n	%
Obesity Prevention	48	19,9
Smoking and Tobacco Prevention	37	15,4
Increasing Physical Activity	37	15,4

Eating More Fruits and Vegetables / Mediterranean Diet	33	13,7
Avoiding Salt	27	11,2
Periodic Health Examinations	22	9,1
Avoiding Stress and Depression	19	7,9
Protecting from Extreme Hot and Cold	16	6,6
Traditional Treatment Methods	7	2,9
Coffee Consumption	8	3,3
Tea Consumption	3	1,2
Avoiding Extreme Tiredness	3	1,2
Chocolate Consumption	3	1,2

Three most frequently given tips for preventing cardiovascular diseases are obesity prevention, smoking and tobacco prevention and increasing physical activity.

Table 3. Content of the news and an expert opinion.

	Expert Opinion (n=162)	No Expert Opinion (n=79)	P Value
	n %	n %	
Periodic Health Examinations	22 27,8	0 0	0,001

Obesity Prevention	34 20,9	14 17,7	0,551
Increasing Physical Activity	32 19,7	5 6,3	0,007
Smoking and Tobacco			
Prevention	28 17,3	9 11,4	0,234
Innovations in Medicine	13 13,6	1 1,3	0,035
Protection from Extreme Hot and Cold	15 9,3	1 1,3	0,019
Celebrities with Cardiovascular Problems	2 1,2	16 20,3	0,0001

The news items that are about celebrities with cardiovascular health problems do not contain sufficient expert opinions in order to be statistically significant. The news that advise “increasing physical activity”, “protection from extreme hot and cold”, “periodic health examination” contain large number of expert opinions in protection against cardiovascular diseases to be statistically significant. The most frequently given tips that are obesity prevention and protection from extreme hot and cold contain nearly the same amount of expert opinion (Table 3).

Discussion

According to statistics the percentage of newspaper readership in our country is 22%(İstatistikler, 2001). All around the world, it is common for science reporters, which can play an important role in health communication, to act like a bridge between the science world and people by following scientific journals and explaining them to people in a way that they can be able to understand (İnce and İnce, 2001). The news should be supported with expert opinions and references to give reliable and accurate information. In this study, it is found crucially important that 77.2% of all news items do not contain the name of the reporter and 18.3 % of all news items do not contain any expert opinion or reference. Birsen and Ozturk in their study called “Health news in terms of consumption culture” emphasize the fact that nearly all newspapers contain inaccurate references such as Swiss scientists, English scientists, American scientists or only “the scientists” (Birsen and Öztürk, 2011). In the study of Bertand and Ozdemir, the percentage of the news items that

contain a name of a doctor is found as 74% (Hayran and Özdemir, 2011). Additionally, in the study of Kaytaz, et al. (2010), the percentage of the news items that contain a name of a doctor is found as 80% (Kaytaz,et al., 2010).

These news items in media affect individuals consciously or subconsciously for a healthy life or while they are dealing with health problems. Therefore, it is very important to provide health news that is accurate and clear. In 1998 WHO congress, which was held in Moscow between May 28-30, the issues about providing accurate information were discussed in the meeting called “communication for health”. After the meeting, the report is summarized and announced with nine important rules. Those rules are,

1. Do no harm,
2. Investigate, find the accurate,
3. Do not give hope (especially do not mention about miraculous treatment),
4. Ask yourself the question “Who will benefit from this news?”
5. Do not forget the principle of privacy,
6. Think one more time if the news is about sick, disabled and children,
7. Do not put private life and sorrows into your news,
8. Never use sorrow for emotional blackmail,
9. If you cannot decide just give up the news (Hayran and Özdemir, 2011).

In this study, it is very valuable and important for public health that the newspapers give place to accurate tips for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. This is because; sometimes newspapers can make sensational presentations in order to increase readability and brand value of the newspaper. In this study, we could only find five example of this.

According to study that McCool, et al. (2011) are conducted in New Zealand, infectious diseases take more place in newspapers (Kaytaz, et al., 2010). However, chronic diseases also need this kind of support. The tips that are given for preventing cardiovascular diseases such as smoking cessation, increasing physical

activity, stress management and obesity control are also play an important role in etiopathogenesis of chronic diseases such as cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and degenerative diseases.

In the study of Köksal, et al. (2012), 184 news items are analyzed in four newspapers during two year period. General health information about physical activities (35.9%), weight management (21.2%) and cardiovascular (11.9%) effects of the physical activities were the most frequently given as the main content of the articles (Köksal, et al., 2012).

The major limitation of the study is having 6 month period. Additionally, the news items are analyzed in electronic environment, therefore some variables for Budd score cannot be assessed such as page number, percentage of the page that the news takes place, etc.

In one of the studies that is conducted in our country, it is pointed that people can access news fast in electronic environment than hard copy. Therefore, news in newspapers is turned into life guide. Additionally, it is reported in the same study that almost every newspaper have their own health professional who writes regularly. Especially it is emphasized that the health news that is about beauty and esthetic try to idealize and create perceived ideal body. Thus, the consumption is encouraged to reach this aim (Birsen and Öztürk, 2011). It is very important to manage health news by considering this fact. This is because; the news media is a key source of health and science information for public audiences. However, there are many factors that help to shape news reports of new scientific developments. Scientists and government officials also contribute to how messages are framed for public audiences, especially when the content of media reports, as seen in our results, relies heavily on expert opinions and interviews. As such, they should work together to ensure that science communication is accurate and balanced. As a matter of fact, in the future, the people that have specialized in health news should also specialize in health issues such as cancer, environment, nutrition, cardiovascular diseases etc. (Karavuş, 1997).

Health issues facing the Balkans increasingly include chronic diseases, which would benefit from greater media coverage to increase advocacy and political awareness of global health challenges.

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