

Risk perception as key factor in seeking pre-travel advice for European destinations: an interview study among Dutch travellers

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Introduction

Although European destinations are often considered low-risk, many require travel health advice, including vaccinations. Yet, Dutch travellers to European destinations are underrepresented at travel clinics. This study aims to identify factors influencing Dutch travellers to seek pre-travel advice and visit a travel clinic for European destinations.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews, based on the Health Belief Model, were conducted between August and December 2025 with travellers to European destinations with vaccination recommendations. Purposeful sampling based on age, gender, destination, and visit to the travel clinic (yes/no) was used to interview a diverse sample.

Results

Twenty participants were interviewed (70% female, median age 47 (range: 24-77)). Participants' decisions to seek pre-travel advice depended mainly on their risk perception, influenced by destination and travel characteristics. Exposure to a cue to action (e.g. travel experiences of acquaintances, media reports, or advice from authorities) increased awareness of possible infectious disease risks and had a motivating effect on seeking pre-travel advice. Participants who did not visit a travel clinic experienced less cues to action and had less knowledge. Some participants assumed information on risks will be provided if necessary. Generally, travel within Europe was perceived as safe and 'close to home'.

Conclusion

Our results show that seeking pre-travel advice for European destinations with vaccination recommendations is highly dependent on risk perception. Relevant cues to action are necessary to increase awareness, as travellers perceive Europe as safe. These insights help to better reach travellers who need travel advice, especially with increasing infectious disease risks in Europe.