

Health Promotion Model (HPM)

Frequent Questions and Answers

Nola J. Pender

1. Why did you develop the Health Promotion Model?

Very early in my nursing career, it became apparent that health professionals intervened only after people developed acute or chronic health problems. Attention was devoted to treatment. I was convinced that the quality of life of individuals could be greatly improved by preventing problems before they occurred. Further, health care dollars could be saved by promoting healthy lifestyles. I became interested in how people make decisions about health behaviors. I read extensively about health, optimal health, high level wellness, and health behavior. The models of preventive behavior, such as the Health Belief Model, focused on “fear” or negative motivation. I decided that a model was needed that focused on positive sources of motivation for health behaviors. The first version of the HPM focused on general influences on health behaviors. The second version of the HPM focused on behavior-specific influences which have more predictive power than general influences.

2. What has been the impact of your work on nursing education?

The HPM is taught in community health or health promotion and illness prevention courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels in most nursing programs. The HPM is a framework that nurses can use in counseling individuals and families to adopt healthy behaviors. The variables in the HPM can be assessed and interventions focusing on those variables can then be built on that assessment. Providing students with behavioral counseling skills is an important part of health promotion education.

3. What has been the impact of your work on nursing practice?

Health promotion counseling guidelines can be developed for an entire institution and health promotion systems can be put into place that focus on HPM variables. New computer technologies can be used to conduct assessments and tailor interventions to specific individuals facilitating personalized health promotion counseling by the nurse. Tested theories that have been supported can provide the basis for evidence-based nursing in health promotion.

4. What has been the impact of your work on nursing research?

I believe that my research in health promotion has been direction setting for nursing research. The HPM synthesizes research findings from nursing, psychology, and public health into a model of health promoting behavior that can be empirically tested. When I first began systematically studying health promotion, little attention was given to the topic in the National Institutes of Health. Now, there are programs in many Institutes, including the National Institute of Nursing Research, that fund health promotion studies.

5. Has the HPM been used in other cultures?

The HPM has been used and tested in many cultures world-wide. I have worked with international scholars to assist them in applying the HPM to education, research, and practice. Examples of countries in which the model has been used include: Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, China, Mexico, Ecuador, Iran, and Brazil.