FAMILY COMMUNICATION ABOUT GENETIC DISEASE RISK: INVESTIGATING FACTORS PROMOTING DISCLOSURE AND INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the last decade, genetic links have been found to some of the most common diseases in the United States (www.cdc.gov/genomics/gtesting/index.htm). While much research has investigated how families cope with these diseases, little research has explored the communicative processes individuals go through in communicating genetic disease risk to family members. This study explores the family communication of individuals who have tested positive for a gene mutation which puts them at an increased risk for cancer. More specifically, this study utilizes Family Communication Patterns Theory and Communication Privacy Management Theory to investigate the role of family communication and privacy management in an individual's communication about genetic disease risk with family members, as well as individual well-being outcomes from that communication. Results found family communication patterns and privacy management to play important roles in the process of communicating about genetic disease risk in families.