

## **Patient health engagement model: explaining citizens noncompliance and maladaptive behaviors**

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### **Background:**

At the end of February 2020 a new case was diagnosed with COVID-19 in north Italy, suddenly followed by new cases. Italian health authorities decided to enforce restrictive measures. Northern areas of Italy were identified as “red areas” to slow down the epidemic and its impact on the healthcare system. From this perspective, the COVID-19 epidemic in Italy constitutes a testing ground for the assessment of the ability of consumers to cope with this health risk.

### **Methods:**

A cross-sectional study on a representative sample of 1000

Italian citizens was conducted over the period 27 February- 5 March exploring the following hypotheses: 1) less engaged individuals are more concerned for the health emergency and feel more vulnerable; 2) less engaged have higher probability to develop negative attitudes and dysfunctional behaviors.

### **Results:**

only the 16% the interviewees presented a high level of engagement. Lower levels of engagement were measured in the southern parts of Italy (not yet touched by the epidemics at the time of data collection). People with lower levels of engagement reported higher fears for the contagion and sense of vulnerability. Furthermore, they showed the lower levels of trust in the Public Health Authorities, in medical research and in vaccines. Finally, they appeared more dismissive in their preventive behaviors and more disorganized in the fruition of the healthcare services.

### **Conclusions:**

A psychological analysis of processes of attitudinal and role change in the direction of becoming more engaged in health prevention is worthy in order to forecast potential dysfunctional reactions to restrictive health prevention measures and to orient personalized education initiatives to consumers with different level of engagement.

### **Key messages:**

- Profiling based on the levels of health engagement is important in order to plan more effective healthcare measures during epidemics.
- Targeted educational initiatives should take into account citizens' engagement profiles.