SHARP, KATHERINE, E., May 2005   HEALTH EDUCATION AND
                                        PROMOTION

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE CORRELATES OF
OSTEOPOROSIS FEAR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS (198 pp.)

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The present study examined the potential use of Extended Parallel Process Model
(EPPM), a fear appeal approach, to increase awareness of osteoporosis prevention and
encourage osteoprotective behavior among young adults. The purposes of this study
were: (1) to examine the extent to which 18 to 24 year college students fear developing
osteoporosis; (2) to examine the relationships between fear and several variables of
interest (e.g., constructs of the EPPM, knowing someone with osteoporosis); and (3) to
assess the relationship between fear of osteoporosis and behavioral intention to prevent
the disorder.

This study included 311 Kent State University students aged 18 to 24 enrolled in
undergraduate health education and communication studies courses. A frequency analysis
was conducted to determine the extent to which college students fear developing
osteoporosis. Two separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to
determine to most important predictors of osteoporosis fear and behavioral intention to
engage in osteoprotective behaviors.

The frequency analysis indicated that many college students fear developing
osteoporosis. The regression analysis conducted to assess the correlates of osteoporosis
fear revealed that perceived severity, perceived susceptibility, not having a family history

of osteoporosis, and gender (being female) were the best predictors of osteoporosis fear. The regression analysis conducted to examine the correlates of behavioral intentions found that perceived self-efficacy, fear, perceived knowledge, and speaking to a health care professional about osteoporosis were the best predictors of behavioral intentions to engage in osteoprotective behavior.

The use of a fear appeal approach such as the EPPM may hold some merit for understanding fear of osteoporosis and intentions to protect oneself, yet further research is needed to determine the best correlates of fear and behavioral intentions. Regardless of the approach, prevention messages should stress perceived severity, perceived susceptibility and perceived self-efficacy as these constructs have been found to heighten concern about the condition and encourage behavior change in this study as well as others (Kasper, Peterson & Allegrante, 2001; Smith Klohn & Rogers, 1991; Wurtele, 1988).