

What influences perception of cardiovascular risk and how does it compare with the actual cardiovascular risk? A population-based study.

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Introduction: Current guidelines recommend treating patients according to their absolute cardiovascular (CVD) risk. We compared participants' actual absolute CVD risk with perceived CVD risk, and examined associated factors.

Methods: We assessed, by a questionnaire, how participants perceived their "risk to get a heart attack or a stroke over the next ten years" using semi-quantitative and quantitative categories among a representative sample of 816 persons aged 40-64 in the Seychelles (African region). Actual CVD risk was also calculated using the WHO/ISH risk prediction charts for the African region.

Results: According to the WHO/ISH risk score, around 24% were at elevated risk. A semi-quantitative risk estimate was provided by 59%, and a quantitative risk by 31%. Reporting a risk was associated with younger age and high socioeconomic status (OR=9). Among participants who reported a perceived semi-quantitative risk, 67% reported a medium or high risk. Compared to their actual risk, 48% of participants who reported a risk overestimated their perceived risk, and 4% underestimated it. Individuals treated for a CVD risk factor tended to have a high risk perception. Other predictors of high perceived risk included older age, low socio-economic status, and being overweight. Predictors of reporting a low perceived risk were being male, younger age, higher education, normal BMI, and exercising during leisure time.

Conclusion: Only half of the participants were able to provide an estimate for their perceived CVD risk, and this was strongly associated with high socioeconomic status. Among those who reported a risk, treated individuals reported a higher perceived risk than non-treated participants, which suggests that perception of risk is amenable to change. Further studies should determine how risk-related information should be conveyed to patients as an expected means to improve adherence to treatment



Research Day

January 29, 2009
César Roux Auditorium

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Couverture : Yannick Krempp, Département de Biologie Cellulaire et de Morphologie – UNIL

Photo : DNA microarray image of an RNA expression profiling experiment provided by
Manuela Weier and Henrik Kaessmann of the Centre Intégré de Génétique - CIG
and Jérôme Thomas of the Lausanne DNA Array Facility, Centre Intégré de Génétique - CIG



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