Communicating cardiovascular (CV) risk and supporting lifestyle behaviour change in patients with psoriasis: A qualitative study

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Background: Psoriasis is a complex, long-term, inflammatory disease affecting around 2% of the UK population. Evidence indicates that severe psoriasis is associated with cardiovascular disease (CVD) however the nature of this relationship is currently unclear.

Objectives: The study aims to explore the effects of practitioner risk communication in patients with psoriasis in primary care. It will identify communication techniques that facilitate patient understanding of CV risk and their motivation to engage in changes to lifestyle behaviours in order to reduce such risk.

Methods: This qualitative study involves audio-recording CV risk assessment screening and follow-up consultations between patients with psoriasis and their practitioners in primary care, with subsequent in-depth interviews using tape-assisted-recall. Data are being analysed using principles of Framework Analysis.

People with psoriasis are more likely than others to engage in unhealthy lifestyle behaviours which are risk factors for CVD. The ways in which information about risk are presented affect both how health professionals introduce it to patients and how they respond. Understanding and improving risk communication may lead to improved strategies to encourage behavioural changes to reduce such risks.

Results: Early analysis indicates variation in practitioner consultation style, with some focused largely on recording information and others recognising and responding to specific patient cues for discussion of risk and lifestyle change.

Conclusion: The study findings will inform understanding of the structure and processes of the consultation where risk information is discussed, and of the most useful techniques to improve patient understanding of risk and modify health behaviours to reduce risk.