Communicating cardiovascular disease risk factors to people with psoriasis: What techniques do practitioners use?

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BACKGROUND: Psoriasis is associated with unhealthy lifestyle behaviours, consequently increasing cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk. Whilst risk communication is challenging for healthcare professionals, little is known about specific methods used to communicate information about risk during CVD screening consultations with patients with psoriasis.

AIM: To examine how primary care practitioners communicate risk information to psoriasis patients when conducting CVD screening consultations.

METHODS: Consultations (n=44) between practitioners (general practitioners and practice nurses) and patients with psoriasis across 10 primary care practices were audio-recorded and analysed using content analysis. A coding frame was used to record specific techniques used by practitioners to communicate risk information.

RESULTS: Most frequently used risk communication methods were verbal descriptors accompanied by numerical data (n= 28) rather than verbal descriptors alone (n=16).

When discussing biomedical measurements (e.g. blood pressure; n=131 occasions), interpretation of the information was provided to patients on 103 (78.6%) occasions. However, specific advice behaviours to modify risk factors was given on 62 (47.3%) occasions.

When discussing lifestyle factors (n=51 occasions), interpretation of the information was provided on 44 (80%) occasions, and specific advice about how to reduce risk was given on 34 (66.7%) occasions.

CONCLUSION: There was little consistency in how health risk information was communicated. Interpretation of risk information was not always linked to specific advice about how to change lifestyle behaviour in order to modify CVD risk factors. Effective risk communication ensures patients with psoriasis are empowered to make lifestyle modifications to reduce CVD risk.