"I've enough to do without doing more." Messages that psoriasis patients take away from CVD risk assessments: A qualitative study.

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BACKGROUND: Psoriasis is associated with engagement in unhealthy lifestyle behaviours, including those leading to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Self-affirmation theory suggests that individuals try to maintain a perceived sense of worth. Threatening health messages may endanger perceived worth, and individuals may respond defensively to downplay health threats or interfere with accurate information processing. However, when feelings of self-worth are maintained, individuals are more likely to undertake risk reduction behaviours.

OBJECTIVES: This study aimed to explore the understanding and experiences of CVD risk assessment in individuals with psoriasis using self-affirmation as an underlying theoretical framework.

METHODS: In-depth “tape-assisted recall” interviews were conducted with twenty-nine people with psoriasis who had previously participated in an audio-recorded CVD risk assessment consultation. Data were analysed using principles of Framework Analysis to generate key themes.

RESULTS: Two overarching themes were identified: 1) patients felt that they learned very little new information about their personal CVD risk or how to reduce it, 2) patients also commonly reported strong emotional reactions to risk discussions including feelings of burden, relief and motivation.

CONCLUSION: Risk discussions during consultations about cardiovascular disease risk (CVD) with people with psoriasis may be limited by additional perceived burden of behavioural change, the sense of threat to self or a heightened emotional state interfering with information processing. Clinician training focusing on identifying problematic emotions and appropriate use of self-affirmation techniques with patients could improve the effectiveness of CVD risk assessment with psoriasis patients.