‘You’re never going to get anywhere’: a mixed methods examination of the process of cardiovascular disease risk assessment and communication with patients who have psoriasis

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Presented at the UK Society for Behavioural Medicine 10th Annual Scientific Meeting

BACKGROUND AND AIM: Unhealthy lifestyle is common in people with psoriasis, contributing to exacerbations and increased cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends clinicians address lifestyle in psoriasis. Risk communication should improve patients’ perception of personal risk and ways to reduce it; however the effectiveness of CVD health checks is debated. We aimed to critically examine the process of CVD risk communication in patients with psoriasis.

METHODS: Assessment of 287 patients with psoriasis in 13 English general practices to determine proportions of risk factors present; audio-recordings of consultations (130 risk assessment and 15 follow-up) used to inform in-depth interviews with 29 patients and 12 practitioners; content analysis to identify salient process issues in consultations and Framework Analysis to analyse interview data.

RESULTS: At risk assessment a high proportion of patients had risk factor levels above those recommended by NICE guidance: very high waist circumference (51%); obesity (35%); raised blood pressure (29%); smoking (18%) and excess alcohol consumption (18%). Limited discussion about CVD risk and personalised behaviour change support for patients was evident in consultations and practitioners reported a lack of training. Nonetheless, patients wanted lifestyle discussions and believed practitioners could be influential in supporting them to make changes.

CONCLUSION: Despite high levels of risk factors present, opportunities are missed in consultations to support psoriasis patients to understand CVD risk and make lifestyle changes. Findings have informed practitioner training in more effective lifestyle management with patients to capitalise on ‘teachable moments’ arising in consultations.