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Providing Coronary Risk Information to Patients

Patients who received global risk scores were more cognizant of their risk category, but 10-year absolute risk reduction was small.

The American Heart Association advises clinicians to use a global coronary heart risk score as an initial determinant of a patient's candidacy for aspirin prophylaxis or lipid-lowering therapy. In a systematic review, authors assessed whether providing such scores to patients improved the accuracy of self-perceived risk, enhanced adherence to therapy, and subsequently lowered coronary heart disease (CHD) risk.

Of the 18 included studies, 14 were randomized, but only 5 involved more than 125 patients. In aggregate, these studies showed that providing risk information to patients improved their perception of their risk category to a small extent. In only one study (involving 98 patients) did investigators assess whether providing global coronary heart risk scores to patients enhanced adherence to therapy; it showed a slight but nonsignificant improvement. Finally, studies in which patients repeatedly received information on their risk and educational counseling yielded small absolute improvements in predicted 10-year CHD risk (0.2%–2.0% lower risk).

Comment: Although empowering patients with quantitative information about coronary risk seems sensible, this review shows that the effect is only modest. Clearly, we need to learn more about how to counsel and motivate our patients effectively.

— [Jamaluddin Mooloo, MD, MPH](#)

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Sheridan SL et al. The effect of giving global coronary risk information to adults: A systematic review. *Arch Intern Med* 2010 Feb 8; 170:230.

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