



Effective Health Care

Visual Depiction of Risk Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- Visual depiction of risk is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available at this time; however, it will be considered for a potential white paper as part of the John M. Eisenberg Center for Clinical Decisions and Communications Science conference series.

Topic Description

Nominator: Public policy maker/payer

Nomination Summary: The nominator states that patients are often not adherent to suggestions of lifestyle change (e.g., weight loss, smoking cessation, exercise) made by their physicians. He questions whether a visual depiction of risk (e.g., graphs, survival curves, charts) could increase the rates of patient behavior change compared to physician admonition alone. The nominator specifically mentions patients with diabetes and high blood pressure.

Staff-Generated PICO

Population(s): Men and women with higher risk of high blood pressure, obesity, tobacco use, or cardiovascular disease

Intervention(s): Use of visual depictions of risk (with or without physician admonition)

Comparator(s): Physician admonition without visual depictions of risk

Outcome(s): Adherence to behavior modification suggestions; improved health status, indicators, and outcomes

Key Questions from Nominator:

1. What evidence exists that a graphic depiction of risk of non-adherence to behavior change vs. usual care (physician admonition without graphic depiction) results in greater adherence to weight reduction, diabetes management, blood pressure management, and tobacco cessation recommendations from their physician?
2. If there is limited evidence, can new research consider the use of graphic depictions with physician recommendation vs. usual care (physician admonition without graphic depiction) and the rate of patient adherence to lifestyle change recommendations?

Considerations

- The topic meets EHC Program appropriateness and importance criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)

- Effective risk communication can improve awareness of health risks and promote patient risk reducing behavior. However, one of the challenges in communicating health risk to patients is the difficulty in expressing complex information in an easily comprehensible and effective format. Using visual depictions of risk, such as charts or graphs, may make this information more accessible to patients.
- Very little research has been conducted to determine whether showing patients these visual depictions changes their behavior or health outcomes. Given the lack of literature that addresses the effectiveness of graphic depiction of risk for achieving a lifestyle change, a systematic review is not feasible.
- The John M. Eisenberg Center for Clinical Decisions and Communications Science translates comparative effectiveness reviews and research reports created by the Effective Health Care Program into short, easy-to-read guides and tools that can be used by consumers, clinicians, and policy makers. The Eisenberg Center also hosts scientific meetings for discussion about communication and medical decision making. Experts in health communication and related fields come together to write papers that offer insight into the current evidence related to health care decision making. For more information about the John M. Eisenberg Center, see <http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/who-is-involved-in-the-effective-health-care-program1/about-the-eisenberg-center/>.
- A previous conference series produced a paper titled Communicating Harms and Benefits of Prescription Drugs to Health Care Consumers. The topic of visual depiction of risk will be considered for a follow-up paper in this series.