Reviewer's report

Title: Physicians' Ability to Predict the Risk of Coronary Heart Disease

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Level of interest: not specified

Advice on publication: Other (see below)

The objective of this study is to evaluate physicians' ability to predict coronary heart disease among patients in primary prevention. The authors note the previous studies have only studied risk prediction in a limited number of patient scenarios and they wish to examine how specific patient characteristics or the degree of baseline risk affect risk prediction. Accordingly, they asked physicians at three academic medical centres to complete a survey of 12 hypothetical patient scenarios.

Risk estimates were reasonably accurate only 24% of the time. Most physicians overestimated risk. The lower the Framingham estimate of risk, the more physicians tended to overestimate it. Physicians also tended to overestimate risk with increasing levels of blood cholesterol.

Given that this study and others have demonstrated a systematic overestimation of risk, it is not surprising that the lower the Framingham calculated risk the greater the overestimation of risk. This study adds to the evidence that cardiovascular risk is difficult to accurately calculate using only clinical judgement.

Competing interests:

None declared.