SESSION 43: MORE INTERESTING TOPICS RELATED TO THE ABDOMINAL AORTA, AAA AND EVAR

DEBATE: Why AAA Screening And Detection Programs Can Be Harmful
1:30 PM - 1:35 PM

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I have the following potential conflicts of interest to report:
Consulting
Employment in industry
Shareholder in a healthcare company
Owner of a healthcare company
Other(s)
X I do not have any potential conflict of interest

Detection of AAA may be harmful:
Surveillance: psychological consequences

Experience from non-AAA screening programmes point to risks of:
- Stigmatisation
- Fear
- Agression
- Emotional reactions,
- Psychosomatic reactions,
- Social isolation,
- Nocebo effects (opposite to placebo effect)
  - "Blame the Victim"reactions


The participants were prospectively, and randomly sampled from the Viborg study.
A home-made, later validated generic and global anonymous quality of life (QL) questionnaire by self-assessment (ScreenQL).

Material case-control study: Controls (none-invited), none attenders, and attenders before and after screening.
Prospective cohort-study of detected cases during surveillance and after repair.

Diagnosis of an AAA seems to impair QL permanently and progressively in conservatively treated cases*.
Impairment appears after repair.

Quality of life: The VIVA trial


- Theresa Marteau: Professor in psychology, expert in psychometrics with strong criticism of mammography screening in the late 80's
- Independent research on psychological consequences in MASS trial
- No significant reactions or states compared to the non-invited controls, except a short and transient reaction on those having surgery – in all, the differences, if any, were small, she concluded..

Qualitative studies

Concludes serious need for proper information: harm of being under surveillance

“The danger of an aneurysm is not knowing you have one”

Conclusion: "This highlights the importance of communicating knowledge about the abdominal aortic aneurysm to promote men’s feelings of security and giving space to discuss the size of the aneurysm and lifestyle changes".

Detection of AAA may be harmful:
Preventive repair

• Screening RCTs show that approx. 2 elective repairs are needed to prevent 1 rupture

A genuine ethical dilemma which currently can’t be solved

- We need better personalized decision tools


Blind justice?

Stigmatisation
- Fear
- Aggression
- Emotional reactions
- Psychosomatic reactions
- Social isolation
- Nocebo effects (opposite to placebo effect)
- "Blame the victim" reactions
- Overdiagnosing

Complications and deaths for AAA which wouldn’t have caused harm left untreated

Men aged 65 are old enough to make a decision on their own.