Population versus individual health

- probabilities on a population level still mean binary outcomes on the individual level
- preferences for risk and benefit strongly depend on circumstances and can vary between individuals

"Would you jump out of a plane if you knew that there was a 1 in 10 chance that your parachute would not open and you would die?"

"Well, if that plane was heading towards a cliff, then yes, I would."

quote from a patient workshop, kindly provided by M. Longley, WHDC

MPNE2015 documentary
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtRe0dOG4kc
Evidence-based medicine ...

but ‘don’t trust any statistics you haven’t faked yourself.’

B.Ryll 2018
Evidence? It just depends on how you look at it

Do you want to be dead for sure or have a small chance to survive?

Any data can look good or bad

- depending on the patient population you include- a problem in times of increasingly personalised medicines
- granularity and patient-selection will become increasingly important
- evidence does not exist in an empty space- comparators and alternative options are critical 'maybe not grand but still the best we got’
- ‘the sour grape story’: retro-fitting evidence to cost-constraints

indiscriminate desinvestment will miss out on benefits = social cost to society
Trust needs to be earned....but not like this

’It is irresponsible not to check your PSA/ get your mammography- think about your families’

’It is irresponsible to check your PSA/ get your mammography- all those unnecessary follow-up exams and treatments!

’Don’t google- trust your doctor!’

to summarize

• decisions can look obvious when you talk about populations- but less so when you are the individual patient

• data on efficacy is hardly black or white, generally useless treatments tend to be underused anyway, especially in the era of guidelines = no budget impact; inappropriate generalisation leads to loss of benefit

• stop dogmatic health communication: knowledge is always limited and swinging from one dogma to the opposite without sufficient explanation (apologies would also be accepted) dangerously erodes trust
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