CORRESPONDENCE

Increasing smokers’ risk perception improves CT screening participation

We read with interest the article by Patel et al1 and wish to comment on their findings with specific regard to smokers’ risk perception, motivation and low participation rates in CT screening programmes.

Based on the studies to date, there is a consistent theme that smokers’ participation in CT screening programmes for lung cancer is poor when their motivation is low and much greater when their perception of risk of lung cancer is high.2 3 Despite overwhelming public health messaging, smokers continue to smoke, in large part, because they perceive their own risk from smoking to be low. This self-perception of low risk (termed optimistic bias) maintains a low level of motivational tension (the fear that smoking might indeed be harmful).4 We propose that optimistic bias can be undermined, and motivational tension increased, when smokers are confronted with adverse ‘personalised’ risk data.5 With advances in the understanding of the clinical and genetic factors underlying lung cancer susceptibility, we have developed a lung cancer susceptibility risk model.6 This model assigns current and former smokers through the use of personalised risk testing, incorporating genetic markers of susceptibility, may help identify and motivate ‘high risk’ smokers to engage in CT screening.

R P Young, R J Hopkins
Schools of Biological Sciences and Health Sciences, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Correspondence to Dr Robert P Young, Respiratory Genetics Group, University of Auckland, PO Box 26161, Epsom 1344, Auckland, New Zealand; roblety@adhb.govt.nz

Funding RPY, and the funding of his research, has been supported by grants from the University of Auckland, Health Research Council of New Zealand and Synergenc BioSciences Ltd. Synergenc BioSciences Ltd holds patents for gene-based risk testing for lung cancer susceptibility.

Competing interests None.

Contributors RPY: researched and wrote the correspondence. RJH: researched, wrote and edited the correspondence.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

Accepted 22 December 2011


REFERENCES
Increasing smokers' risk perception improves CT screening participation

R P Young and R J Hopkins

Thorax published online January 16, 2012

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://thorax.bmj.com/content/early/2012/01/16/thoraxjnl-2011-201453

These include:

References
This article cites 4 articles, 2 of which you can access for free at:
http://thorax.bmj.com/content/early/2012/01/16/thoraxjnl-2011-201453#BIBL

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/