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Decisional equipoise is not decisional conflict: Avoiding the false clarity bias in the evaluation of decision aids and shared decision making processes

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AIMS: To question the construct validity of using ‘sureness’ questions, such as items 10-12 in the Decisional Conflict Scale (DCS) [5, 6] and item 1 in the SURE [4] instruments, in evaluating decision aids and processes. To investigate empirically the extent of equipoise in a trial of decision aids [1,2] using the expected value of combining evidence-based Ratings with personal criterion Weightings as individual’s Option Scores. To establish relationship between equipoise and decision quality as self-assessed by MyDecisionQuality (MDQ) [3], a dually-personalised instrument not including ‘sureness’.

CONCLUSIONS:

• Evaluations of decision aids and Shared or unshared Decision Making processes, should accept that equipoise is a possible and legitimate outcome, even after full and unbiased processing of evidence and preferences. In ‘toss-up’ situations two or more options may be equally good [7].
• Instruments used in such evaluations should therefore not reward unwarranted ‘sureness’ or ‘decisional conflict reduction’, since this potentially leads to a ‘false clarity’ bias.
• Empirically, going or not going for PSA screening for prostate cancer emerged as a ‘toss-up’ for the majority of the 727 Australian men in one arm of a trial of two decision aids based on Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis, implemented in Annalisa® [2]. There was virtually no correlation between the Absolute Difference in the Option Scores and Decision Quality self-assessed by MDQ.

**RESULTS FOR SCREENING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Policy</th>
<th>2712</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSA screening</td>
<td>No PSA screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weightings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ratings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of lifetime</td>
<td>Headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.2170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SURE**

Respondent 2712 shows .01 Absolute Difference between PSA and No PSA Scores, combining evidence-based Ratings with personal criterion Weightings

**RESULTS FOR DECISION QUALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MyDecisionQuality (Weightings items)</th>
<th>2712</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scores</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weighings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Decision Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.9994</td>
<td>0.0012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MDQ Score of respondent 2712 (combining his Weightings and Ratings) was .733. Overall correlation of MDQ Score and Absolute Difference for 727 respondents = .06

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Jack Dowie has a financial interest in Annalisa, but did not benefit from use in the trial concerned.