

Reviewer's report

Title: Cardioprotective aspirin users and their excess risk of upper gastrointestinal complications

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Reviewer: Neville Yeomans

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper provides new information about the risk of gastrointestinal complications in patients taking low dose aspirin, which will allow physicians and their patients to estimate their absolute risk of such a complication according to how many of a suite of known GI risk factors they have. This allows a meaningful discussion of the risks versus the benefits of low dose aspirin in the individual patient. In general, the paper is of high standard, from a group who have a lot of expertise in this area.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

In section 2.3 of Materials and Methods, it is counter-intuitive that patients taking NSAIDs have a lower relative risk if they have a past ulcer history. The authors do clarify that the ABSOLUTE risk is higher in these patients, but it is important to reference this assumption.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

In para 3 of Results, it is stated that 'Although not shown in the chart, these rates would be around 4 times higher among NSAID users and would double with aspirin use.' However, the data ARE given for both NSAID use and aspirin use in Chart 2. This needs to be revisited or clarified.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

The authors talk in Results about the proportions of patients whose UGIC incidence rate is above 20 per 1000 person-years. It may be worth highlighting that in a few (males 90 and older, with an ulcer history who also take NSAIDs, the risk exceeds 100 per 1000 person-years. I suspect that many clinicians who prescribe aspirin are unaware that risks climb so high.

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

What next?: Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after minor essential revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests that would bear on this paper.