



LETTERS

FEAR IN OVERDIAGNOSIS AND OVERTREATMENT

Risk factor (predictive) medicine as a driver of fear and overdiagnosis

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Heath is right to argue that we have to face up to our fears of uncertainty if we want to limit overdiagnosis and overtreatment.¹ I think that one major driver of these fears comes from the development of medicine that is based on the identification and treatment of risk factors and from blurring of the boundaries between risk and disease.² Indeed, being at risk of disease is increasingly confounded with having the disease itself.³ This is one reason why the diagnostic criteria for several conditions have been widened, thereby increasing the proportion of individuals who are potentially worried by their health. Admitting the limits of what risk factor (predictive) medicine can offer at an individual level could help prevent several of these problems.^{4,5}

Competing interests: None declared.

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