

Summary points

Methods of communicating health risks to health policy makers have been neglected

Decision makers require easily understandable measures that show the impact of risk factors for disease on populations to help guide the allocation of resources according to local health needs

The population impact number of eliminating a risk factor (PIN-ER-*t*) is “the potential number of disease events prevented in your population over the next *t* years by eliminating a risk factor”

The PIN-ER-*t* can be used to show the impact of a range of risk factors in different populations and to compare the potential benefits of individual and population approaches to prevention

We have reported that individual clinicians are not as influenced by the presentation of risk in population terms as they are by relative risk (Heller et al, submitted for publication), while others have found that the “number needed to treat” statistic (which also relies on measures of absolute risk) is poorly understood by doctors and lay people.^{29, 30} It remains for us to examine whether new measures of population impact like PIN-ER-*t* can be more easily understood and used in health policy related decision making than traditional methods of communicating risk. We are developing a research programme to explore this further.

Contributors and sources: The authors work at the Evidence for Population Health Unit, aiming to develop a public health counterpart to evidence based medicine. The measure described here is one of a series of population impact measures developed to use evidence combined with routinely collected data to provide local context to measures of risk and benefit and support public health policy decision making.

Competing interests: None declared.

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Corrections and clarifications

Parathyroid hormone alone is as effective as combination in treating osteoporosis

We enthusiastically added a reference to this news article by Scott Gottlieb to help readers locate the study being reported (27 September, p 700). Unfortunately, although we got the year and volume of the *New England Journal of Medicine* right, we published the wrong page numbers. The correct reference is 2003;349:1207-15.

ABC of subfertility: male subfertility

Two errors crept into in this article by Anthony Hirsh (20 September, pp 669-72). Firstly, we incorrectly inserted an extra word in the caption to the figure on page 670; the caption should read: “Autosomal Robertsonian translocations may be associated with poor sperm quality and subfertility.” Secondly, we made a dog's dinner of the caption to the figure on page 671. The photograph in fact shows a “microsurgical vasovasostomy for vasectomy reversal.”

General practitioners and occupational health professionals

We inadvertently typed the word “health” instead of “medicine” when we inserted the competing interests for one of the authors of this editorial by Jeremy Beach and David Watt (9 August, pp 302-3). Professor Beach is in fact an assistant editor of the journal *Occupational Medicine*.