

How to Provide Information to Patients about Side Effects

A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Objective: To determine the affect of providing different format about side effect information (verbal versus numerical) to acne patients in Saudi Arabia that are newly prescribed Roaccutane.

Design: A prospective study assessing patients' degree of overestimation about side effect information.

Participants: 141 Acne patients newly prescribed Roaccutane.

Settings: Four dermatology clinics in Riyadh. Two in tertiary Hospitals and the other two in private clinics

Intervention: Each Patient received information about a side effect. The side effect provided was supplemented with the probability of occurrence, which was written either in words or in numbers. (Dry eye "very common" or "30%"; Loss of hair "rare" or 0.01%).

Main Outcome Measures: Patient estimation of side effect occurrence. Other outcomes were the likelihood of experiencing the side effect, the severity of the side effect, their perception of risk of the side effects to their general health, their satisfaction with the information provided and, whether the information provided will influence their decision to take the medicine.

Result: The mean estimate for side effect occurrence for the dry eyes was 46% in the verbal group and 41% in the numerical group ($p=0.5$); for loss of hair it was 50% in the verbal group and 39% in the numerical group ($p=0.03$). There are no significant differences between the remaining measures.

Conclusion: Patients overestimate the probability of occurrence of side effect. Verbal format of probability of occurrence is associated with higher estimation then numerical format.