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“NORMAL” RISK AND DANGERS OF COVID-19

Awareness of normal risk is not normal

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Epidemiological rates and disease risks often do not resonate well with the general public.^{1,2} This is primarily because human beings are more attuned to anecdotes than hard data. The “Jade Goody effect” on cervical cancer screening amply demonstrates the power of anecdotes.³ So “excess normal risk information” is unlikely to have a substantial effect on public awareness.

People are more likely to seek health information about personal vulnerability, not population level risks. Clinicians on the front line would prefer an easy-to-use risk stratification score that can inform clinical judgment.⁴ So “normal risk” terminology is neither useful nor relevant for individuals or clinicians.

Finally, awareness of normal risk is not normal. The public do not go about their daily life thinking of their mortality risk. Death occurs to others. Even patients with incurable cancer use hope and optimism as coping mechanisms.⁵ Educating the public about extra mortality risk over and above “normal risk” would be a tall order.

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