

Difficulties faced by early career researchers engaged in overdiagnosis research and solutions for overcoming them

Tuesday 26th April 2022

Abstract

Overdiagnosis is a counterintuitive topic that challenges aspects of conventional medicine, the intuitive belief in early detection, and society's deep faith in medical technology. It goes against cultural norms such as "more is better", "knowledge is power" and "experts know best". Researchers involved in this space may therefore encounter obstacles to conducting scholarly work and challenges to communicating their findings. These difficulties may also carry personal costs and impediments to professional progress. While not unique to this field of research, resistance to conducting and disseminating overdiagnosis research is frequent and may be severe.

This session will make use of first-hand experiences of researchers working in this area, and, through discussion, propose practical solutions to mitigate and safeguard against adverse consequences when conducting overdiagnosis research.

The format of this panel discussion will involve short presentations on and discussion of:

1. Complexities in communicating research on the counterintuitive topic of overdiagnosis and overtreatment
2. Examples of difficulties and challenges encountered
3. A proposed taxonomy to aid in the description and identification of drivers of challenges in conducting overdiagnosis research
4. Potential solutions to challenges encountered, and steps to minimise the risk of experiencing adverse academic, personal and professional costs.

Learning objectives: By the end of the session, participants will have -

1. Recognize academic, personal and professional difficulties and costs encountered when undertaking research on overdiagnosis, and be able to -
2. Identify drivers of resistance to the conduct and dissemination of overdiagnosis research
3. Describe a proposed a taxonomy of difficulties and costs associated with conducting overdiagnosis research, including threats to psychosocial and physical health, career advancement, conduct of ongoing research, and obtaining research funding
4. Outline possible solutions to challenges encountered at individual and system levels.

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