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Personal risk readiness and the framing effect in medical doctors

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Background: Decision-making for professionals in medical care includes a risk factor. Cognitive regulation of decisions may involve the framing effect, as was demonstrated by A. Tversky. Personal regulation of decision making for medical doctors presupposes their attitude towards uncertainty and risk (risk intelligence).

Research question: To what extent is the framing effect related to personality features of medical doctors.

Methods: The study was designed to compare two groups (total N=118): medical students (N=78, of them 73% were women) and medical doctors of various specialties (N=40, of them 55% were women). Measures: (1) Asian disease problem. (2) Direct self-assessment of risk readiness. (3) Personal Risk Factors questionnaire, assessing risk readiness and rationality. (4) Implicit Risk Theories questionnaire, assessing risk perception.

Findings: The framing effect was found in 36% of medical doctors and in 42% of medical students. The doctors who were not susceptible to the framing effect assessed themselves as risk-taking and perceived risk to be a conscious choice ($r=0.6$, $p < 0.01$). Medical students showed a higher risk readiness and perceived risk as a choice and pleasure ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion: Self-assessed risk readiness, in both medical doctors and students, is related to implicit theories of conscious risk. Implicit theories change during the education process. Medical doctors are able to control their risk readiness. The framing effects indicate that although medical care is given on the foundation of academic knowledge, cognitive processes interfere in decision-making.

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