

3.12 Cardiovascular Health - Preventing heart attacks, angina and strokes

Richard, 64, had some blood tests last week. His total cholesterol was 6.6 and his HDL cholesterol was 0.9. Richard has stable CKD. His blood pressure is fine.

Elicit: Why did we arrange these tests Richard?

Richard: Mostly because my dad had a heart attack at an early age. I read an article recently in the paper and I decided it was time that I had a health check.

Provide: Well your cholesterol numbers aren't too exciting. The total cholesterol is 6.6 and your good cholesterol number is 0.9. But your kidney wear and tear and your family history do put up your risks.

Elicit: OK?

Richard: Yes.

Provide: To assess your risk of having a heart attack or stroke over the next 10 years we've entered all your details, including your recent blood tests and blood pressure, into the computer and it's guesstimated your risk of heart attacks or strokes in the next 10 years as 25%, if we do nothing.

Elicit: Are you with me?

Provide: The absolute cardiovascular risk/benefit tool allows you to make decisions about what you are prepared to do to keep your risks down.

Clearly you are going to keep exercising and stay off the fags. A healthy diet such as the mediterranean diet is protective too.

Elicit: Does any of that grab you?

Richard: I do all of that already.

Provide: We encourage you to try taking a statin if your 10 year risk score is 20% or more.

Elicit: Have you heard of statins?

Richard: They lower your cholesterol.

Provide: Yes. Statins lower cholesterol, but more importantly they reduce your risk of heart attacks and strokes slightly. (By a quarter of your risk.)

Elicit: Might you be interested in trying one? At a low dose initially?

Richard: Go on then.

Provide: We need to check your liver test before you start the tablets. Occasionally statins can cause some soreness of your muscles. If this is a problem, please stop them temporarily and we can think about giving you an even lower dose. Just because we're starting tablets for your cholesterol, it doesn't mean that you can give up on the healthy diet and exercise.