**DNA test revealing genetic risk of disease has 'no impact on lifestyle choices'**

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People were not put off smoking or drinking

Revealing the conditions a person is at risk of developing because of their genetic makeup does not prompt people to change their lifestyles, a new study has found.

Researchers in the UK found that alerting a person that their DNA suggest they are prone to certain diseases has “little or no impact” on unhealthy behaviour.

This included the likelihood a person would stop smoking, cut their alcohol intake, or exercise more to reduce the risk.

Such findings could impact how medics and public health officials use the growing field of personalised healthcare which is partly based on a person’s genetics.

A team of experts from the University of Cambridge, the University of Manchester and Imperial College London made their findings by assessing 18 research papers on the effectiveness of informing people about their genetic risk of heart disease, Alzheimer’s and some cancer.

The research published in the BMJ found that informing people of the risks personal to their DNA did not encourage them to change their lifestyles, such as protecting their skin from the sun or changing unhealthy diets. It also did not make them more likely to attend a screening or use behavioural support programmes.

The authors said that they had expected people to be encouraged to change their behaviour after learning of their health risks.

“The results of this updated systematic review ... suggest that communicating DNA-based disease risk estimates has little or no impact on risk-reducing health behaviour,” they concluded.

They added: “The available evidence does not provide support for the expectations raised by researchers and proponents of personalised medicine as well as direct-to-consumer testing companies that the receipt of results from DNA-based tests for gene variants that confer increased risk of common complex diseases motivates behaviour change.”

The research was published following the launch of the all-party parliamentary group on personalised medicine, with the aim of helping the NHS and patients to use new technologies which could revolutionise healthcare.

Dr Hilary Burton, director of the health policy think tank comment: “Opportunities for bioscience and technology to transform healthcare and deliver better health via personalised medicine are rapidly expanding, and we are delighted to provide the secretariat to this significant new parliamentary group as they examine these opportunities and consider how to ensure that patients and populations get the greatest health benefits from them.”

Additional reporting by PA