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A GP community facing overdiagnosis

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The general population's health demands are often conditioned and encouraged by economical interests and cultural habits. Italian General practitioners are nowadays under pressure for patient's increasing requests of screening and treatments which, according to the scientific literature, may have questionable value or even be harmful. In this context, the Trento's school of GP vocational training has undertaken an educational project (FRIDA) developed through literature review, classroom meetings, internet file sharing and a "field investigation" with research thesis. The FRIDA project's aim was to update both the GP student and the local GP community on over-treatment and over-diagnosis issues and facilitate a peer to peer review of common practice on these arguments. Some of the covered topics were: Breast cancer screening decision aid; Woman's perception of the benefits of mammography screening; Practice of opportunistic PSA screening; Practice of opportunistic carotid arterial stenosis screening in asymptomatic patients; Global cardiovascular risk assessment in asymptomatic adults; NSAIDs prescription in patients with heart failure or chronic renal disease; Tumor markers measurements in diagnosis and monitoring of cancer; laboratory test prescribing in estrous-progestin treatment; Practice of screening in pregnancy. This "community experience" has allowed to identify some critical issues: widespread misconception of benefit/risk ratio in common clinical practice, progressive increase of potentially inappropriate opportunistic screening, high rates of inappropriate multi-prescription to frail patients, urgent need of developing decision aids to help patients choices.