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# Motivation for behavior change in patients with chest pain

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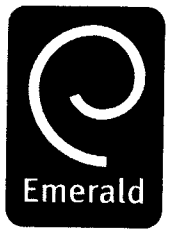


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## Abstract

**Purpose** – To assess the effect of diagnostic testing for coronary artery disease (CAD) on motivation for change, and on lifestyle change for patients with chest pain.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This observational study followed patients with chest pain suggestive of CAD for three years. Constructs of autonomous and controlled motivation for lifestyle change, autonomous orientation, and autonomy support from self-determination theory were assessed. Self-reported tobacco use, physical activity, and diet were assessed at baseline and three years later. Physician rating of pre- and post-test probability of CAD were also assessed. CAD diagnosis was established after three years.

**Findings** – Physicians' autonomy-supportive style and patients' autonomous orientations both predicted greater patient autonomous motivation, which in turn predicted improved diet, more exercise, and marginally less smoking. High probability of CAD also led patients to become more autonomously motivated for lifestyle change.

**Research limitations/implications** – The observational nature of the study and the self-report measures of health behaviors preclude causal conclusions from this study. Findings from this study suggest that patient motivation and risk behavior are affected by results of cardiac testing, by physicians' support of autonomy, and by patients' personalities.

**Practical implications** – Physicians may be effective in motivating behavior change around time of testing for CAD.

**Originality/value** – The self-determination theory model for health behavior change accounted for change in patient health risk behavior change around the time of testing for CAD. Physicians and researchers might use these results to design and test interventions for practitioners to effectively motivate behavior change around the time of medical tests.

**Keywords** Heart, Diseases, Lifestyles, Motivation (psychology)

**Paper type** Research paper

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