Brief report

In the Identification of Cardiovascular Risk With the SCORE Model, Could We Recommend Its Calculation Interchangeably With Total Cholesterol or Atherogenic Index? Concordance Between Total Cholesterol and Atherogenic Index in the SCORE Table

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INTRODUCTION

To prioritize interventions in patients in primary cardiovascular (CV) prevention, we need to stratify their CV risk. In Spain, the adjusted REGICOR and SCORE functions are used for this purpose.1 However, in an earlier study, we concluded that discrepancies exist between both methods and the clinical implications for the identification of high CV risk. Observational study (n = 8942) in a 40- to 65-year-old population. Spearman’s Rho correlation was 0.987 (P < .001), the agreement intraclass correlation coefficient was 0.671 (IC 95% 0.413–0.796; with Bland–Altman’s method, the average of the differences between models was 0.74. Kappa index was poor, 0.297 (P < .001) and positive specific agreement was 0.31. Discrepancies fitted individuals with high CV risk with SCORE-TC and not-high with SCORE-AI (4.7%) and 5.8% (n = 518) of individuals were classified as high-risk according to SCORE-TC vs. 1.1% (n = 95) according to SCORE-AI. Poor agreement was found between SCORE-TC and SCORE-IA for identification of high cardiovascular risk individuals.

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Rev Esp Cardiol. 2011;64(5):421–423

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 23 March 2010
Accepted 20 June 2010
Available online 8 March 2011

KEYWORDS:
Cardiovascular risk
Primary care
SCORE

ABSTRACT

The SCORE table indiscriminately recommends the use of total cholesterol (SCORE-TC) or atherogenic index (SCORE-AI) for calculating cardiovascular (CV) risk. We evaluated reliability and agreement between both methods and the clinical implications for the identification of high CV risk. Observational study (n = 8942) in a 40- to 65-year-old population. Spearman’s Rho correlation was 0.987 (P < .001), the agreement intraclass correlation coefficient was 0.671 (IC 95% 0.413–0.796; with Bland–Altman’s method, the average of the differences between models was 0.74. Kappa index was poor, 0.297 (P < .001) and positive specific agreement was 0.31. Discrepancies fitted individuals with high CV risk with SCORE-TC and not-high with SCORE-AI (4.7%) and 5.8% (n = 518) of individuals were classified as high-risk according to SCORE-TC vs. 1.1% (n = 95) according to SCORE-AI. Poor agreement was found between SCORE-TC and SCORE-IA for identification of high cardiovascular risk individuals.

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En la identificación del riesgo cardiovascular con el modelo SCORE, ¿se puede recomendar su cálculo indistintamente con colesterol total o índice aterogénico? Concordancia entre el colesterol total y el índice aterogénico en la tabla SCORE

RESUMEN

La escala SCORE recomienda indistintamente dos métodos para el cálculo del riesgo cardiovascular: uso de colesterol total (CT) o del índice aterogénico (IA). Se evaluó la correlación entre ambos y la concordancia en la identificación del riesgo cardiovascular elevado. Estudio observacional en población de 40-65 años. Se calcula el coeficiente de correlación intraclass (CCI) de acuerdo, el método de Bland–Almand (MBA) y el índice Kappa (IK). El CCI intraclass fue de 0,671 (intervalo del confianza (IC) del 95%, 0,413-0,796; p < 0,001); con el MBA, la media de las diferencias fue 0,74. El IK fue 0,297 (p < 0,001) y los acuerdos específicos positivos, 0,31. Las discrepancias correspondieron a individuos con riesgo cardiovascular alto con SCORE-CT y no alto con SCORE-IA (4,7%). Presentaban riesgo elevado el 5,8% (n = 518) con SCORE-CT y el 1,1% (n = 95) con SCORE-IA. Falta acuerdo entre los dos métodos para detectar a los pacientes con alto riesgo.

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METHODS

The method used in this cross-sectional observational study was published earlier. Some 33,440 individuals participated within a program of preventive activities in the autonomous Comunidad Valenciana region of Spain. We analyzed 8942 individuals who initially presented high TC (≥200 mg/dL). We enrolled patients aged 40–65 years, with no history of established CV disease, and with data on the CV risk calculation variables required by SCORE. We calculated the correlation between SCORE function values measured with TC and AI, modifying results in patients with diabetes to meet SCORE project recommendations. We used Spearman’s Rho correlation coefficient for ordinal quantitative variables and studied the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) for agreement between the measures. We used the Bland–Altman technique to analyze data for individual differences. We studied agreement in the diagnosis of high risk (≥5%) for SCORE-TC versus SCORE-AI using the Kappa coefficient and the specific indices of agreement in positive and negative results. We described the profile of discrepant patients.

RESULTS

The distribution of patients by risk (high or non-high) for each model and the agreement and discrepant profiles in high CV risk between the two models are in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Spearman’s Rho correlation coefficient was 0.987 (Fig. 1) (P < .001). The Bland–Altman agreement plot (Fig. 2) shows that as SCORE values increase, discrepancy increases too, although the mean difference was 0.74. The ICC was 0.671 (95% confidence interval, 0.413–0.796; P < .001). With SCORE-TC, high risk was present in 5.8% (n = 518) of patients versus 1.1% (n = 95) identified with SCORE-AI. The Kappa index was 0.297 (P < .001) (Table 1) and specific agreements were 0.310 for the positive and 0.976 for the negative result.

DISCUSSION

Our data confirm the high degree of consistency between SCORE-TC and SCORE-AI calculations, as Spearman’s coefficient, the ICC and Bland–Altman results are all good. However, correlation coefficients are not the best means of expressing agreement because even if two measures are closely related, they may not give the same result. This is fundamental when studying the diagnosis of patients as being at high risk or not, due to the prognostic consequences entailed.

Figure 1. SCORE function cardiovascular risk values: Spearman’s Rho correlation coefficient for values calculated with total cholesterol total or atherogenic index (Rho = 0.987; P < .001).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SCORE-TC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>Non-high risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCORE-AI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>95 (1.1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-high risk</td>
<td>423 (4.7)</td>
<td>8424 (94.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>518 (5.8)</td>
<td>8424 (94.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TC, total cholesterol; AI, atherogenic index. K = 0.297. Data express n (%).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Patients with high risk with SCORE-TC and non-high risk with SCORE-AI (n = 423)</th>
<th>Patients with high risk with SCORE-TC and high risk with SCORE-AI (n = 95)</th>
<th>Total (n = 8942)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>60.9 ± 3.6</td>
<td>62.4 ± 2.7</td>
<td>51.3 ± 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>362.0 (85.6)</td>
<td>76.0 (79.5)</td>
<td>5357.0 (59.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI, kg/m²</td>
<td>28.8 ± 4.1</td>
<td>32.2 ± 13.3</td>
<td>27.7 ± 4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokers</td>
<td>222.0 (52.2)</td>
<td>55.0 (57.7)</td>
<td>2477.0 (27.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes mellitus</td>
<td>107.0 (25.3)</td>
<td>56.0 (59.0)</td>
<td>322.0 (3.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>139.0 (32.9)</td>
<td>45.0 (47.4)</td>
<td>1288.0 (14.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslipidemia</td>
<td>92.0 (21.7)</td>
<td>29.0 (30.8)</td>
<td>1028.0 (11.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline glucose level (mg/dL)</td>
<td>119.2 ± 44.1</td>
<td>149.3 ± 43.2</td>
<td>97.3 ± 24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cholesterol (mg/dL)</td>
<td>244.4 ± 50.4</td>
<td>221.8 ± 45.2</td>
<td>223.3 ± 39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDL cholesterol (mg/dL)</td>
<td>154.3 ± 36.6</td>
<td>141.1 ± 42.4</td>
<td>139.2 ± 36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDL cholesterol (mg/dL)</td>
<td>54.3 ± 15.1</td>
<td>54.2 ± 16.9</td>
<td>59.5 ± 16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides (mg/dL)</td>
<td>155.3 ± 75.4</td>
<td>151.0 ± 105.8</td>
<td>124.3 ± 81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>4.76 ± 1.49</td>
<td>4.48 ± 1.38</td>
<td>4.02 ± 1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systolic BP (mmHg)</td>
<td>145.0 ± 17.1</td>
<td>163.5 ± 17.7</td>
<td>127.3 ± 17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diastolic BP (mmHg)</td>
<td>84.2 ± 10.8</td>
<td>89.7 ± 11.3</td>
<td>78.2 ± 10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AI, atherogenic index; BMI, body mass index; BP, blood pressure; HDL, high-density lipoprotein; LDL, low-density lipoprotein; TC, total cholesterol.

Data express n (%) or mean ± standard deviation.
The Kappa index for high CV risk diagnosis is low because of the many discrepancies that point in the same direction: SCORE-TC diagnoses high risk when SCORE-AI diagnoses non-high risk. The Bland–Altman method graph this, showing that as SCORE function values increase, discrepancies increase too.

The influence of the imbalance between positive and negative results depends on the prevalence of the condition being studied (in this case, ≥5% risk). This implies that simply because of the greater prevalence of high risk, we obtain a higher Kappa index score. Given that in Spain the incidence of ≥5% risk may be lower than elsewhere, this could partly explain why we obtain such low agreement.

Over 80% of patients with high CV risk measured with SCORE-TC would not, in daily clinical practice, be identified as such with SCORE-AI. This discrepant group represents 5% of the sample. These patients present many CV risk-factors and have little control over them. Among men the evidence is clearest in the use of statins and that the discrepancies in high CV risk classification are five times greater with SCORE-TC than with SCORE-AI. This discrepant group represents 5% of the sample.

Figure 2. Bland–Altman agreement for the two methods of calculating cardiovascular risk using total cholesterol (TC) or atherogenic index (AI).

CONFICTS OF INTEREST

None declared.

REFERENCES