Guideline-indicated treatments and diagnostics, GRACE risk score, and survival for non-ST elevation myocardial infarction

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Aims
To investigate whether improved survival from non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI), according to GRACE risk score, was associated with guideline-indicated treatments and diagnostics, and persisted after hospital discharge.

Methods and results
National cohort study (n = 389,507 patients, n = 232 hospitals, MINAP registry), 2003–2013. The primary outcome was adjusted all-cause survival estimated using flexible parametric survival modelling with time-varying covariates. Optimal care was defined as the receipt of all eligible treatments and was inversely related to risk status (defined by the GRACE risk score): 25.6% in low, 18.6% in intermediate, and 11.5% in high-risk NSTEMI. At 30 days, the use of optimal care was associated with improved survival among high [adjusted hazard ratio (aHR) -0.66 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.53–0.86, difference in absolute mortality rate (AMR) per 100 patients (AMR/100 = -0.03, 95% CI -0.06 to -0.01)]. For low-risk NSTEMI, there was no association between the use of optimal care and improved survival remained only for high-risk NSTEMI (aHR = 0.66, 95% CI 0.50–0.96; AMR/100 = -0.03, 95% CI -0.06 to -0.01). For low-risk NSTEMI, there was no association between the use of optimal care and improved survival at 30 days (aHR = 0.92, 95% CI 0.69–1.38) and at 8.4 years (aHR = 0.71, 95% CI 0.39–3.74).

Conclusion
Optimal use of guideline-indicated care for NSTEMI was associated with greater survival gains with increasing GRACE risk, but its use decreased with increasing GRACE risk.

Keywords
Non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction • Quality of care • Mortality • GRACE risk score

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Introduction

For patients with non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI), evidence from international studies suggests that guideline-indicated care treatment and diagnostics are associated with improved clinical outcomes. Evidence from randomized controlled trials, suggest that the absolute effect is greater for NSTEMI at high ischaemic risk where there is reduced mortality, and lower rates of unscheduled revascularization, stroke, and hospitalization for heart failure. It is unknown, however, if beyond the setting of trials the effects of such interventions for NSTEMI (including pharmacotherapies as well as an invasive coronary strategy) are evident and, if so, whether such effects persist after discharge from hospital.

The Myocardial Ischaemia National Audit Project (MINAP) represents all acute hospitals in the single healthcare system of England and Wales and prospectively collects information about treatments provided, case mix and mortality of patients hospitalized with acute coronary syndrome over 15 years. Thus, MINAP is an optimal research conduit for understanding the impact of evidence-based NSTEMI care on clinical outcomes. We accessed anonymized patient data from MINAP to investigate whether improved survival associated with the use of NSTEMI guideline-indicated treatments was evident across the spectrum of NSTEMI risk, and whether mortality benefits were maintained over the long-term following discharge from hospital.

Methods

Data and subjects

The study was conducted using the MINAP. Data were entered electronically at each hospital where they were encrypted prior to secure transfer to a central database, anonymized and then distributed upon application for research. Each year MINAP data are validated at participating hospitals.

The study population included all patients (1 January 2003 to 30 June 2013) with a discharge diagnosis of NSTEMI. This diagnosis was determined by the treating team and based upon clinical presentation and investigations, including biomarkers, in keeping with the universal definition of myocardial infarction. Patients who died in hospital (n = 31,321) and for whom, there were no survival data (n = 21,567) were excluded from the cohort in keeping with previous work (Figure 1).

Baseline clinical risk was determined according to the adjusted mini-GRACE risk score, which has been validated using MINAP data and endorsed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The variables included age, cardiac arrest, electrocardiographic ST-segment deviation, elevated cardiac enzymes, systolic blood pressure and heart rate at the time of hospitalization, use of a loop diuretic (substituted for Killip Class), and creatinine. In line with the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology and European Society of Cardiology NSTEACS guidelines, we categorized patients according to their risk of in-hospital mortality using the calculated GRACE risk score as low (<10%; predicted mortality <1%), intermediate (≥10% to <140%; predicted mortality ≥1.0% to <3.0%), and high (≥140%; predicted mortality >3%).

Receipt of guideline indicated care was measured according to a composite optimal care variable. This comprised 13 care interventions, previously mapped to MINAP data by the authors, which were identified following review of international guidelines. The 13 interventions included receipt, if eligible, of an electrocardiogram pre- or in-hospital, pre-hospital receipt of aspirin, echocardiography, an aldosterone antagonist during admission, coronary angiography, aspirin on discharge, P2Y12 inhibition on discharge, ACE inhibitors (ACEI)/angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) on discharge, β-blocker on discharge, HMG Co-A reductase inhibitor (statin) on discharge, referral for cardiac rehabilitation, smoking cessation advice, and dietary advice (see Supplementary material online).

Statistical analysis

Baseline characteristics were described using numbers and percentages for categorical data and means and standard deviations or medians and IQRs for normal and non-normally distributed continuous variables. Differences in patient characteristics according to patient demographic and baseline clinical data were compared across GRACE risk score categories using 2, t-tests, and Wilcoxon rank-sum tests as appropriate for the data type and distribution.

Flexible parametric survival modelling was used to assess the association of optimal care with long-term survival according to GRACE risk score category. To model the change in hazard ratio (HR) over continuous follow-up time, optimal care, and GRACE risk score categories were included in the model as time-varying covariates. We selected flexible parametric survival modelling to overcome violation of the proportional hazards assumption and to estimate the baseline hazard function using restricted cubic splines (see Supplementary material online, Section S2, Table S2 for model selection choice). The model was adjusted for patient demographics (sex, Index of Multiple Deprivation), medical history (diabetes, smoking status, family history of coronary heart disease, hypertension, previous myocardial infarction, previous angina, peripheral vascular disease, cerebrovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or asthma, chronic renal failure (defined as creatinine chronically >200 µmol/L (>2.26 mg/dL)), congestive cardiac failure, previous percutaneous coronary intervention, coronary artery bypass graft surgery, and total cholesterol). Survival differences were quantified as HRs and
differences in absolute mortality rates (AMR) per 100 patients, with an AMR of zero indicating no differences in mortality rates between the optimally treated patients (received all care interventions they were eligible for) vs. those sub-optimally treated. However, an AMR less than zero indicates lower mortality rates in the optimally managed patients compared with the sub-optimally managed.

Multiple imputation by chained equations was used to produce 10 imputed datasets to minimize potential bias caused by missing data. Of the 34 MINAP variables considered in the study (Table 1), the majority had less than 10% missing data (n = 26). Overall, we had complete data across all variables included in the flexible parametric modelling for 184 390 of patients. Multiple imputation by chained equations allowed the inclusion all 389 057 patients in the main study analyses and, as such, prevented loss of information whilst mitigating potential bias from missing data. Pooled model estimates and accompanying 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were generated according to Rubin’s rules (see Supplementary material online, Section S3, Table S4). All tests were two-sided, and statistical significance was considered as \( P < 0.05 \). Statistical analyses were performed in Stata MP64 version 14 (http://www.stata.com/) and R version 3.1.2 (http://cran.r-project.org/).

**Ethical considerations**

MINAP is managed by the National Institute for Cardiovascular Outcomes Research (NICOR) (ref. NIGB: ECC 1-06 (d)2011). NICOR has support under section 251 of the NHS Act 2006 for the conduction of medical research utilizing patient information without formal consent. Formal ethical approval was not required for this study under NHS research governance arrangements for use of non-identifiable patient data. The research complies with the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Results**

There were 389 057 patients included in the study with median age of 73 years (IQR 62–81 years) and 143 388 (36.9%) were female (Figure 1). There were more low risk [73 351 (39.7%)] than intermediate risk [59 201 (32.1%)] and high risk [52 005 (28.2%)] patients with NSTE-MI (Table 1). High-risk NSTE-MI were older than intermediate and low-risk NSTE-MI [84 (79–88) vs. 76 (70–81) vs. 59 (52–66) years, respectively] and more likely to be female (47.9% vs. 40.2% vs. 26.6%). In general, levels of co-morbidity increased with increasing GRACE risk score category (Table 1). However, smoking decreased with increasing GRACE risk score category, and a family history of ischaemic heart disease was more frequent in the lower GRACE risk score group. Summary data for patients in whom the GRACE risk score was missing, prior to multiple imputation, is provided in Supplementary material online, Section S4, Table S5.

In total, 44 530 (11.5%) patients received optimal care, with the median proportion of eligible care received being 70.0% (IQR 55.6–85.7%). Care interventions most frequently not provided were receipt of aldosterone antagonists during admission [9426 (82.5%)], provision of smoking cessation advice [133 726 (80.6%)], provision of dietary advice [254 869 (68.1%)], and receipt of echocardiogram [181 831 (46.7%)]. Both receipt of optimal care and the proportion of care received decreased with increasing GRACE risk score category (optimal care 18 785 (25.6%) and proportion of care 83.3% (IQR 66.7–100) for low-risk NSTE-MI vs. 5958 (11.5%) and 72.7% (IQR 60.0–87.5) for high-risk NSTE-MI; \( P < 0.001 \) (Table 1, Supplementary material online, Figure S1). Receipt of care did not vary significantly by GRACE risk score for electrocardiogram and aspirin on discharge, but increased for in-hospital aldosterone receptor blocker (13.4%, 19.4%, and 20.3% for low-, intermediate-, and high-risk patients, respectively). Whilst receipt of care decreased with increasing GRACE risk score for all other care opportunities, the greatest decreases were observed for coronary angiography (85.4%, 65.7%, and 38%), pre-hospital aspirin (71.1%, 60.0%, and 47.1%), and smoking cessation advice (48.7%, 29.5%, and 18.4%) for low-, intermediate-, and high-risk patients, respectively. Patients with missing GRACE risk score data had similar characteristics to those with complete GRACE risk score data, except for optimal care (8795, 4.3%) and the proportion of care received (63%, IQR 50–75%), which were lower (see Supplementary material online, Section S4, Table S5).

**Mortality, guideline-indicated treatments, and ischaemic risk**

There were 113 856 (29.2%) deaths corresponding to 10.5 deaths per 100 person years. A pattern of greater early hazard for death was evident across the spectrum of NSTE-MI risk, and accentuated among high-risk NSTE-MI (Figure 2). Across all GRACE risk score groups for landmark time periods 0–1 years, 1–2 years, and 2–3 years, but not 3–8 years, unadjusted mortality rates were significantly higher for patients who did not receive optimal care (Figure 3). After adjustment, there remained a benefit in receiving optimal care regardless of estimated ischaemic risk. [Adjusted hazard ratio (aHR) = 0.62 (95% CI 0.56–0.68) difference in absolute mortality rate per 100 patients (AMR/100) -0.01 (95% CI -0.01 to 0.00) Table 2]. At 30 days, the use of all eligible guideline-indicated treatments was associated with improved survival among high risk NSTE-MI [aHR = 0.66 (95% CI 0.53–0.86) AMR/100 -0.19 (95% CI -0.29 to -0.08)], and intermediate risk NSTE-MI [aHR = 0.74 (95% CI 0.62–0.92); AMR/100 -0.15 (95% CI -0.23 to -0.08) Table 2]. At the end of
Table 1  Baseline characteristics and care interventions received for all NSTEMI and by GRACE risk score category

| Analytical cohort | GRACE risk score category (n = 184 557)* | P-value for difference between GRACE risk score category |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| (n = 389 057)     | Low (<109) (n = 73 351) (39.7%)          |                                               |
|                   | Intermediate (109 to <140) (n = 59 201) (32.1%) |                                               |
|                   | High (>140) (n = 52 005) (28.2%)         |                                               |

- **Patient demographics**
  - Age (years), median (IQR): 72.7 (61.7–81.2), 59.5 (70.4–81.0), 76.0 (70.4–81.0), 84.0 (79.0–88.0), NA
  - Sex (males), n(%): 244 837 (63.1), 53 818 (73.4), 35 442 (59.9), 27 104 (52.1)

- **Patient medical history and clinical measures**
  - History of ischaemic heart disease, n(%): 162 064 (45.2), 22 885 (31.4), 29 334 (50.0), 28 676 (55.7)
  - Hypertension, n(%): 188 503 (48.5), 33 872 (46.5), 94 894 (59.4), 30 605 (59.5)
  - Diabetes mellitus, n(%): 81 469 (20.9), 13 229 (18.2), 15 771 (26.9), 13 598 (26.5)
  - Dyslipidaemia, n(%): 121 243 (33.7), 27 292 (38.0), 21 893 (37.9), 15 952 (31.6)
  - Family history of IHD, n(%): 77 288 (26.2), 29 184 (44.0), 12 302 (25.0), 5915 (14.8)
  - Smoking status (current or previous smoker vs. never smoked), n(%): 217 116 (60.3), 49 323 (68.6), 33 327 (59.0), 25 589 (53.1)

- **Care interventions**
  - ECG during admission, n(%): 371 149 (95.4), 73 351 (100), 59 201 (100), 52 005 (100)
  - Receipt of pre-hospital aspirin*, n(%): 91 679 (70.8), 21 681 (71.1), 13 915 (60.0), 8721 (47.1)
  - Echocardiogram*, n(%): 207 128 (53.3), 44 772 (61.0), 36 834 (62.2), 32 404 (62.3)
  - Receipt of angiography*, n(%): 198 303 (55.7), 60 063 (85.4), 34 691 (65.7), 15 903 (38.0)
  - Aspirin on discharge*, n(%): 301 639 (88.4), 56 130 (92.2), 45 626 (92.6), 39 458 (92.1)
  - P2Y12 inhibition on discharge*, n(%): 127 315 (93.1), 39 858 (95.7), 31 105 (93.1), 24 867 (89.3)
  - ACEi/ARB on discharge*, n(%): 169 942 (75.9), 15 400 (91.5), 21 360 (89.9), 15 656 (40.4)
  - Beta-blocker on discharge*, n(%): 138 656 (78.8), 14 730 (90.5), 14 730 (90.5), 14 730 (90.5)
  - Referral for cardiac rehabilitation*, n(%): 279 027 (76.0), 60 450 (86.1), 44 508 (81.5), 33 671 (74.6)
  - Smoking cessation advice received*, n(%): 32 109 (19.4), 17 405 (48.7), 5434 (29.4), 2350 (18.4)

- **Missing data**
  - (n, % of analytical cohort): 638 (0.2), 258 (0.1)
Table I

| Analytical cohort (n = 389,057) | Continued |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| **GRACE risk score category**  | **Dietary advice received (%)** | **Care by cardiologist (%)** | **Optimal care received (%)** |
| Low (<140) (n = 373,515)      | 41.164 (58.4) | 220,208 (92.9) | 44,330 (11.5) |
| Intermediate (109 to <140)     | 30.484 (33.9) | 18,585 (25.6) | 831,366 (100) |
| High (>2.05) (n = 52,057)     | 18,585 (25.6) | 10,992 (18.6) | 77.8 (63.6–90.0) |
| **Percentage of eligible care interventions received, median (IQR)** | **30-Day mortality** | **1-Year mortality** | **8-Year mortality** |
| Low (<140) (n = 373,515)      | 70.0 (65–83.3) | 359 (3.3) | 1083 (18.1) | 7285 (14.2) |
| Intermediate (109 to <140)     | 44,330 (11.5) | 18,585 (25.6) | 5,164 (3.4) | 3,477 (2.7) |
| High (>140) (n = 52,057)      | 220,208 (92.9) | 10,992 (18.6) | 11,547 (2.2) | 11,530 (2.3) |

AME: angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor/angiotensin II receptor blocker; COPD: Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; GRACE: Global Registry Acute Coronary Events; IQI: interquartile range; SD: standard deviation.

follow-up (8.4 years), the significant association between the use of all eligible guideline-indicated care and improved survival followed for high-risk NSTEMI (aHR = 0.66, 95% CI 0.50–0.96; AMR/100 = -0.03, 95% CI -0.06 to -0.01), but not for intermediate-risk NSTEMI (aHR = 1.04, 95% CI 0.74–1.17; AMR/100 = 0.002, 95% CI -0.02 to 0.03). For the low-risk NSTEMI, there was no association between use of all compared with the use of some eligible guideline-indicated treatments and improved survival at 30 days (aHR = 0.92, 95% CI 0.69–1.38) and at 8 years (aHR = 0.71, 95% CI 0.39–3.74). A sensitivity analysis, which included in-hospital deaths made minimal difference to the effect directions and magnitudes (see Supplementary material online, Section S5, Table S6).

Of the three subgroups of guideline-indicated care treatments and diagnostics, investigative and invasive coronary strategy was associated with the most comprehensive impact on survival—including beneficial effects among low-, intermediate-, and high-risk NSTEMI as well as effects that persisted the longest for the high-risk group (Figure 2, Supplementary material online, Tables S7a–S7c). For intermediate-risk NSTEMI, investigative and invasive coronary strategies were associated with a 28% relative survival improvement up to 3 years (aHR = 0.72, 95% CI 0.57–0.98; AMR/100 = -0.06 to -0.01), and for high-risk NSTEMI a 19% survival improvement at 8 years (aHR = 0.81, 95% CI 0.69–0.97; AMR/100 = -0.02, 95% CI -0.03 to -0.01). Pharmacological therapies were associated with a 46% survival improvement at 6 years (aHR = 0.54, 95% CI 0.37–0.97; AMR/100 = -0.02, 95% CI -0.04 to -0.01) for low-risk NSTEMI, and a 25% survival improvement at 5 years (aHR = 0.75, 95% CI 0.61–0.99; AMR/100 = -0.02, 95% CI -0.04 to 0.00) for intermediate-risk NSTEMI, with no persisting effect for high-risk NSTEMI. Lifestyle care opportunities were associated with a 25% survival improvement at 8 years (aHR = 0.75, 95% CI 0.63–0.92; AMR/100 = -0.02, 95% CI -0.04 to -0.01) for high-risk NSTEMI, but no persisting effect for low- or intermediate-risk NSTEMI.

**Discussion**

In this prospective observational cohort study of 389,057 patients with NSTEMI using data for all acute hospitals in a single health care system, optimal use of guideline-indicated care for NSTEMI was associated with greater survival gains with increasing GRACE risk, but its use decreased with increasing GRACE risk. Of note, is that the mortality benefit associated with optimal care found in high-risk NSTEMI persisted for over eight years from the time of discharge from hospital. Whilst there was a preponderance of low-risk NSTEMI patients who had high rates of survival, these patients proportionally received more evidence-based care compared with intermediate and high-risk NSTEMI. Moreover, a pattern of early death was evident across the NSTEMI risk spectrum, which was accentuated for those with the highest GRACE risk scores. Taken together, these findings suggest that providing all eligible care opportunities to NSTEMI patients has the potential to improve survival, and that those at highest risk will derive greater and more sustained benefit.

To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate how long the impact of the pathway of guideline-directed care according to baseline ischaemic risk among eligible patients with NSTEMI persists. Previous work has demonstrated that guideline-directed therapy
results in improved outcomes at 30 days and 3 years, yet is limited because it focuses on the performance of finite quality indicators or interventions rather than cumulative care. This is important because the treatment of NSTEMI follows a journey of care and defined by evidence from randomized controlled trials and observational studies. Whilst earlier studies have demonstrated excess mortality associated with the non-receipt of guideline indicated interventions along the pathway of care, the potential persistence of effect sizes was not studied.

Low-risk NSTEMI who received all eligible care interventions did not have a significant survival advantage compared with their counterparts who received some or none of the eligible care interventions. Whilst this seems counterintuitive, especially when randomized data have demonstrated clinical benefit from evidence—based treatments for NSTEMI, there are a number of possible explanations. First, the low GRACE risk score comparator group had high rates of receipt of many care interventions; therefore, although care was not optimal for 54 566 patients in this group, it was still high overall (median receipt of care 83.3%), and indeed, those with a low GRACE risk score comprised the greatest proportion of patients with the highest receipt of care. Second, the low rates of death in the low GRACE risk score group created a ‘floor effect’ whereby the discrimination of differences between optimal and suboptimal care was not possible.

We found that an invasive coronary strategy was associated with the most comprehensive and persistent impact on survival. Such an approach to the treatment of NSTEMI improved survival for intermediate and high-risk patients—with effects lasting for many years after hospital discharge following treatment. We noted that the beneficial survival effect associated with pharmacotherapies was

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**Figure 2** Adjusted time-varying mortality rates by receipt of optimal care and clinical risk obtained from a flexible parametric model (odds scale, five degrees of freedom) with time varying covariates by GRACE risk score category for optimal care vs. suboptimal care across the full care pathway (A) and by the following subgroups of the care pathway: pharmacological therapies (B), investigative and invasive coronary strategies (C), and lifestyle (D). *P* = 0.004 for interaction. GRACE, Global registry of Acute Coronary Events, categorized into low (<109), intermediate (109 to <140), and high (>140) risk. *Model adjusted for demographic characteristics including sex, year, deprivation, previous acute myocardial infarction, previous angina, previous PCI, previous CABG, hypertension, peripheral vascular disease, chronic renal failure, chronic heart failure, cerebrovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, smoking status, and elevated cholesterol. Including pre-hospital receipt of aspirin, aldosterone antagonist during admission, aspirin on discharge, P2Y12 inhibition on discharge, ACE inhibitors (ACEi)/angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) on discharge, β-blocker on discharge, and HMG Co-A reductase inhibitor (statin) on discharge. Including receipt of a pre- or in-hospital electrocardiogram, echocardiography and coronary angiography. Including referral for cardiac rehabilitation, smoking cessation advice and dietary advice.
restricted to low- and intermediate-risk NSTEMI for approximately 6 years after hospital discharge, whereas lifestyle modifications were associated with improved survival for up to 8 years among high-risk NSTEMI. We speculate that this differential association with survival may be because the effect of other care interventions such as an invasive strategy is greater than that of pharmacotherapies. Indeed, the advantages of an invasive strategy on early and mid-term clinical outcomes have been demonstrated in randomized studies, yet until now the evidence for its impact on longer-term outcomes has been limited. Our ‘real world’ national study supports these mid-term outcomes data, but also suggests that the impact of coronary angiography and revascularization for NSTEMI extends to at least 8 years.

The utilization of risk scores is recommended by international guidelines. In part, this is because physicians underestimate future ischaemic risk for NSTEMI which in turn contributes to suboptimal use of treatments. Our research supports the use of accurate risk estimation for NSTEMI, and is in keeping with evidence indicating that the GRACE risk score may be used to predict long-term outcomes. Using a validated risk stratification tool such as the GRACE risk score, may enable earlier mobilization of care interventions, and therefore, reduce fatal and non-fatal cardiovascular events.

Moreover, the international burden of NSTEMI burden is high and is set to increase, with associated high mortality rates in the medium to longer-term. It is evident that the opportunities to improve care, and therefore realize reductions in cardiovascular endpoints following acute myocardial infarction, are unmet. Given that all of the interventions selected in this study were based on Class 1 recommendations that have been demonstrated to improve outcomes for NSTEMI, a decline in mortality rates should follow an increase in adherence to guideline-indicated care, with greater and persisting benefits among the higher risk.

To our knowledge, MINAP is the largest whole-country, single health system, prospective observational cohort of the quality of care and clinical outcomes across the spectrum of acute coronary syndromes. It is designed to be representative of the management of acute coronary syndrome in a clinical setting and has standardized criteria for defining case mix and treatments. Nevertheless, there were limitations to our study. First, the study was reliant on accurate recording of data, receipt of dietary and smoking advice was low this...
Guideline-indicated treatments and diagnostics

For nearly 400,000 NSTEMI hospital survivors in England and Wales, guideline-indicated treatment was less frequent among the high-risk NSTEMI, but when provided was significantly associated with improved survival which persisted over the longer-term. There was benefit seen in those at lower risk, though this was not significant due to drug adherence and primary care bias. Indeed, we found that higher attainment of care occurred for lower risk NSTEMI. Finally, this observational study cannot demonstrate causation.

Conclusion

Table 2  Time-varying adjusted hazard ratios and absolute difference in mortality rate per 100 for patients receiving optimal care compared with suboptimal care after multiple imputation for missing data

|           | Optimal care vs. suboptimal care |           |           |           |           |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|           | aHRa                              | Difference in AMR/100 | aHRa      | Difference in AMR/100 | aHRa      | Difference in AMR/100 |
| HR over total follow-up time |                     |                       |           |           |           |
| 30 days   | 0.62 (0.56–0.68) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) | 0.71 (0.63–0.84) -0.02 (-0.03 to -0.01) | 0.57 (0.47–0.73) -0.01 (-0.02 to -0.01) |
| 1         | 0.57 (0.43–0.80) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) | 0.56 (0.44–0.77) -0.01 (-0.02 to -0.01) | 0.56 (0.42–0.82) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) |
| 2         | 0.56 (0.42–0.84) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) | 0.56 (0.42–0.86) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) | 0.56 (0.42–0.87) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) |
| 3         | 0.56 (0.42–0.89) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) | 0.56 (0.42–0.89) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) | 0.57 (0.42–0.89) -0.01 (-0.01 to 0.00) |

Table 3  Time-varying adjusted hazard ratios and absolute difference in mortality rate per 100 for patients receiving optimal care compared with suboptimal care according to low, intermediate and high GRACE risk score category after multiple imputation for missing data

|           | Optimal care vs. suboptimal care |           |           |           |           |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|           | Low GRACE risk                   | Intermediate GRACE risk | High GRACE risk |
|           | aHRa                              | Difference in AMR/100 | aHRa      | Difference in AMR/100 | aHRa      | Difference in AMR/100 |
| HR over total follow-up time |                     |                       |           |           |           |
| 30 days   | 0.76 (0.60–0.96) -0.01 (-0.02 to -0.002) | 0.66 (0.56–0.77) -0.03 (-0.04 to -0.02) | 0.55 (0.48–0.63) -0.07 (-0.09 to -0.05) |
| 1         | 0.71 (0.47–1.49) -0.02 (-0.04 to 0.01) | 0.85 (0.64–1.25) -0.03 (-0.08 to 0.02) | 0.53 (0.42–0.74) -0.18 (-0.25 to -0.12) |
| 2         | 0.71 (0.43–1.93) -0.01 (-0.04 to 0.01) | 0.92 (0.66–1.47) -0.01 (-0.06 to 0.04) | 0.56 (0.42–0.82) -0.12 (-0.17 to -0.07) |
| 3         | 0.70 (0.42–2.31) -0.01 (-0.03 to 0.01) | 0.96 (0.68–1.58) -0.0050 (-0.05 to 0.04) | 0.58 (0.44–0.87) -0.09 (-0.13 to -0.05) |
| 4         | 0.70 (0.41–2.66) -0.01 (-0.03 to 0.01) | 0.98 (0.70–1.65) -0.0017 (-0.04 to 0.04) | 0.60 (0.45–0.90) -0.07 (-0.11 to -0.03) |
| 5         | 0.71 (0.40–2.97) -0.01 (-0.03 to 0.01) | 1.00 (0.71–1.68) 0.0001 (-0.03 to 0.03) | 0.62 (0.46–0.92) -0.06 (-0.09 to -0.02) |
| 6         | 0.71 (0.40–3.25) -0.01 (-0.03 to 0.01) | 1.02 (0.72–1.70) 0.0012 (-0.03 to 0.03) | 0.63 (0.48–0.94) -0.05 (-0.07 to -0.02) |
| 7         | 0.71 (0.39–3.51) -0.01 (-0.02 to 0.01) | 1.03 (0.74–1.71) 0.0019 (-0.03 to 0.03) | 0.64 (0.49–0.95) -0.04 (-0.06 to -0.02) |
| 8         | 0.71 (0.39–3.74) -0.01 (-0.02 to 0.01) | 1.04 (0.74–1.71) 0.0023 (-0.02 to 0.03) | 0.66 (0.50–0.96) -0.03 (-0.06 to -0.01) |

*P<0.001 for interaction.
over the whole study period. The provision of ‘up to standard’ guideline-indicated care for high-risk NSTEMI has the potential to improve their longer-term survival.

**Supplementary material**

Supplementary material is available at European Heart Journal online.

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