How to use Patient Decision Aids

Patient Decision Aids (PDAs) are brief summaries of evidence for the management of a condition. The decision aids have been developed to assist the patient to make an appropriate decision about their condition in conjunction with the GP. The PDAs are not substitutes for discussions with skilled healthcare professionals. They are intended to be used in consultations to encourage better informed, patient-focused decision-making. The precise approach to using a specific PDA may vary depending on the clinician and the patient.

The PDAs utilise **Cates plots**[1] which are smiley face plots to visually communicate the risks and benefits of treatments to patients and are named after the person who developed these tools, Dr Chris Cates. The plots are based on the evidence from the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.

The essence of the Cates Plot is the use of 4 face categories to visually indicate the following:

People not affected by a treatment 😀 green faces for those with a good outcome and 😡 red for those with a bad outcome)

People for which treatment changes their category from a bad outcome to a good outcome (🙂 yellow faces)

People for which treatment causes an adverse event and changes their category from a good outcome to bad outcome (crossed out green faces 😀)
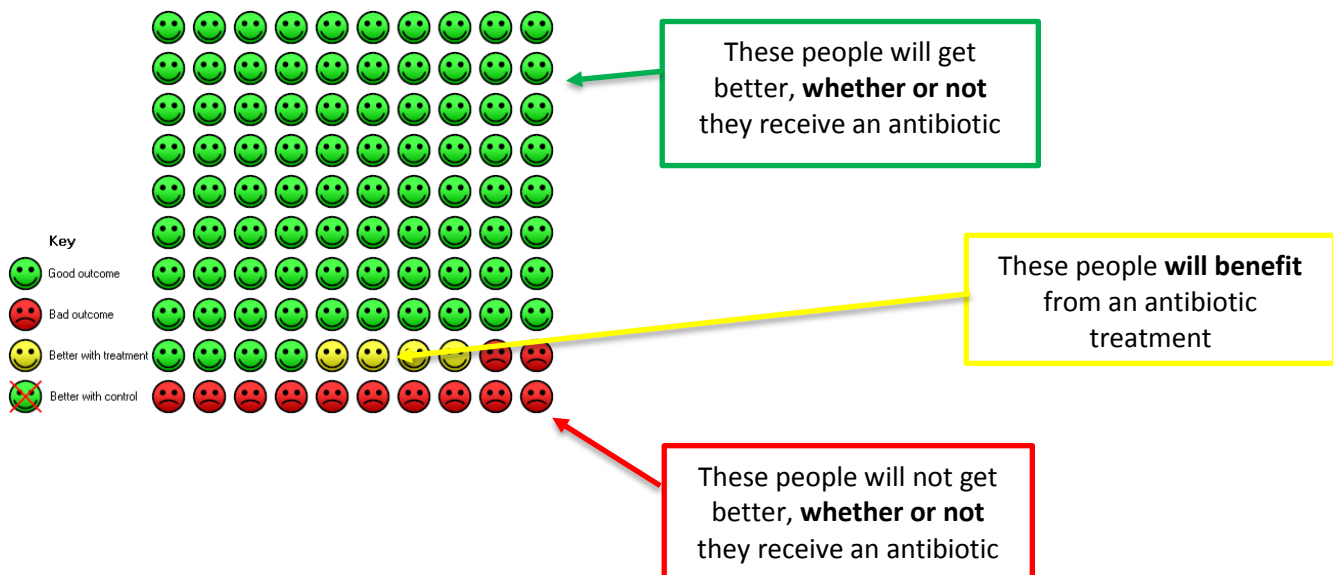
1. These Cates plots have been adapted from the Changing the Antibiotic Prescribing of General Practice (ChAP study). This study is based at the University of Queensland and led by Mieke van Driel with regional GP training providers in four Australian states.