

Debates in the management of hyperuricemia

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There are no world-wide standards for the management of hyperuricemia especially for asymptomatic subjects and mild gouty patients. Asymptomatic hyperuricemia and even mild gout are often left untreated in U.S., while they are often treated by antihyperuricemic drugs in Japan. The results of the recent clinical trials of a new antihyperuricemic drug in Japan and U.S. have suggested that the incidence of severe gouty patients (with tophi) is higher in U.S. than in Japan. Some cohort studies have suggested a cause-and-effect relationship between hyperuricemia and cardiac vascular events while others have excluded a direct relationship and suggested that the association is only coincidental. The conclusion is expected to be obtained by controlled prospective studies; however, no such studies have been published. Although only little evidence is available for the treatment of hyperuricemia, Japanese Society of Gout and Nucleic Acid Metabolism organized an extensive debate over the treatment of hyperuricemia and gout, and published a guideline for the treatment of hyperuricemia and gout in 2002. It was because the lack of guideline would cause a great confusion in the clinical society even though there were only little good evidence. In that guideline the following recommendations are included. (a) Serum urate concentration of over 7.0 mg/dL is defined as hyperuricemia. (b) If a subject has experienced gouty attack(s), drug treatment is considered. (c) If a subject has asymptomatic hyperuricemia with serum urate of below 8.0 mg/dL, he (or she) should be educated about the lifestyle to reduce urate. (d) If a subject has asymptomatic hyperuricemia of between 8.0 mg/dL and 9.0 mg/dL, drug treatment should be considered if accompanying disorder(s) are present. (e) If a subject has asymptomatic hyperuricemia of 9.0 mg/dL or higher, drug treatment should be considered. Because of the rather intense treatment of hyperuricemia and gout in Japan, the incidence of tophi or severe gouty attacks is extremely low. Although the incidence of severe adverse events of antihyperuricemic drugs is unknown, some sporadic cases have been reported.