The Current Practice of Gout Treatment in China

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Gout was thought to be a rare rheumatic disease in China, but recent data suggest that its prevalence appears to be increasing. To understand the current “western medicine” practice of gout treatment in China, we carried out a survey evaluating physicians' statement on the management of gout in 2004. It showed that most Chinese doctors preferred oral colchicine when treating acute flares of gouty arthritis in otherwise healthy patients, but only half of them chose corticosteroids or corticotropin for patients with renal impairment. They tended to initiate the urate-lowering therapy less than 2 weeks after acute flares. Furthermore, only a small portion of them used anti-inflammatory prophylaxis during the initiation of the therapy. Actually, most patients do not accept the prophylaxis, and only a few would like to sustain a longterm hypouricemic medication. Difficulty in therapeutic lifestyle changes, fear of drug toxicities, and casual encounter with doctors defined by current health systems, may all be contributing to patients' poor compliance. In order to improve the education and quality of care, the Chinese Society of Rheumatology published the Guideline for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Gout in 2004, but further studies are needed to evaluate its efficacy in the real world. Recently, Febuxostat was introduced to China, and now it is in verification procedure for marketing. On the other hand, “traditional Chinese medicine” doctors have treated patients with gout for thousands of years. Some of their approaches, e.g. acupuncture, herb medicine, and even modern formulated herbal products, are currently under investigation of their values in ameliorating gout patients' acute flares or lowering the serum urate level.