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Sex Differences in Gout Epidemiology, Evaluation and Treatment

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Background: Very little is known about the characteristics, evaluation and treatment of women with gout. We examined the epidemiologic and treatment differences between men and women in a large patient population.

Methods: We examined data from approximately 1.4 million individuals who were members of seven managed care plans in the United States for at least one year between 1/1/1999 to 12/31/2003. Adult members who had pharmacy benefits and had at least two ambulatory claims specifying a diagnosis of gout were identified. In addition, men and women who were new users of urate-lowering drugs were identified to assess adherence with recommended surveillance of serum urate levels within 6 months of initiating urate-lowering therapy.

Results: A total of 6,133 individuals (4975 men and 1158 women) with 2 or more ICD-9 codes for gout were identified. As compared to men with gout, women were older (mean age 70±13 vs. 58±14, p<.001), more often had comorbidities and received diuretics (77% vs. 40%; p<.001). Only 37% of new users of urate-lowering therapy had appropriate surveillance of serum urate within 6 months of initiating urate-lowering therapy. After controlling for comorbidities, gout treatments, and number of urate-lowering drug dispensings, women were more likely (OR 1.36, 95% CI 1.11-1.67) to receive the recommended serum urate level testing.

Conclusions: There were significant differences between men and women with gout in terms of disease characteristics and treatment practices, suggesting that the factors leading to gout as well as monitoring of therapy are very different in women as compared to men.