

Nine in Ten Physicians Agree Target Goal for Gout Is Imperative, Yet Half of Patients Fail to Reach It, New Survey Shows

Physicians frustrated, advocate for aggressive treatment for gout patients, yet target goal of sUA < 6 mg/dL remains elusive

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- A new survey conducted among primary care physicians and rheumatologists found that despite their overall agreement that gout is a serious and chronic medical condition with potential long-term consequences, patients remain at risk. Of physicians surveyed, 89 percent agree that achieving serum uric acid (sUA) levels < 6 mg/dL is imperative, yet only 51 percent report their patients with gout are reaching this target.

Further, nearly all (94 percent) of healthcare providers (HCPs) surveyed indicate that gout needs to be treated aggressively given long-term consequences, but express frustration (82 percent) when treatments fail to control sUA levels. A majority (89 percent) of physicians surveyed express a desire for additional treatment options for their patients.

"What I find most concerning about these findings is that we as physicians agree gout is not only a painful, often debilitating disease, but can have long-term consequences like permanent joint damage. Moreover, studies are showing a good deal of association between gout and comorbid conditions such as cardiovascular disease and kidney disease. Yet clinicians who treat patients with gout are only getting about half of those patients to their target sUA levels," said Paul Doghramji, M.D., Family Physician, Collegetown Family Practice, Collegetown, PA. "I think there are two reasons why: we haven't had enough treatment options to help manage the disease and there are continued misconceptions about gout that contribute to ineffective disease management."

Gout is a highly symptomatic and painful form of inflammatory arthritis caused by an underlying metabolic disorder, hyperuricemia - or high uric acid levels in the blood - and can lead to painful flares, characterized by excruciating pain, inflammation, swelling and tenderness in one or more joints. Living with uncontrolled gout can put patients at risk of long-term consequences such as inflammation, bone erosion and organ damage. The American College of Rheumatology (ACR) guidelines recommend gout patients maintain sUA levels below 6 mg/dL, a target that remains elusive for uncontrolled gout patients. The survey was conducted online among healthcare professionals (250 primary care physicians and 100 rheumatologists) in August 2016 to gain insight into their perceptions of and treatment practices for gout. Additional survey findings include:

Knowledge Gap Exists Between Physicians and Patients with Gout

Physicians surveyed take treating gout very seriously because of the potential long-term effects of the disease, such as joint damage (97 percent) and cardiovascular risks (83 percent). Nearly all of these physicians (95 percent) say gout has significant impact on patients' physical abilities.

However, 90 percent of physicians surveyed agree that their gout patients do not have a good understanding of the disease, and 95 percent say their patients' focus remains on gout flares rather than the long-term impact of the underlying disease, despite these physicians' efforts to educate their patients about the disease.

Diet Misperceptions Prevail, Impact Action

While a majority of physicians surveyed disagree with the statement that diet is the primary contributor to elevated sUA levels, survey findings indicated physicians put an emphasis on the role diet plays, with 84 percent noting they focus on diet and nutrition as a major area when treating patients with gout, and 75 percent stating they believe most patients with gout could minimize the impact of the disease if they had more control over their diet and alcohol consumption.

Further, nearly half of these physicians indicate their patients are not motivated to schedule follow-up visits to test their sUA level after experiencing gout symptoms. Seven in ten feel their patients accept painful flares or "attacks" as part of living with gout.

"Physicians who treat gout tend to emphasize the role of diet and nutrition with patients, especially since so many patients have failed to reach their target sUA levels. But now it's time to also consider the importance of therapies that can help patients get to their target sUA level," said Dr. Doghramji. "Dispelling myths of gout as a medieval 'rich man's diet' disease, destigmatizing this disease and optimizing available treatments is, in my view, the most constructive path forward for the

gout community."

An Estimated 2 Million Patients in the U.S. Not at Goal

The survey found that only 51 percent of physicians polled report their patients with gout are reaching target sUA levels below 6 mg/dL as recommended by ACR. Prevalence statistics indicate that of the approximately four million U.S. gout patients treated with a xanthine oxidase inhibitor (XOI) alone, approximately 50 percent are not able to maintain target sUA levels. This suggests about two million patients in the U.S. are suffering from uncontrolled gout.

Education, Getting Patients to Target sUA Levels Are Priorities

Of physicians surveyed, educating patients about the long-term consequences of gout (75 percent) and encouraging patients with gout to get their sUA levels to target even when not experiencing flares (72 percent) are physicians' main priorities.

Findings also revealed key insights into how these physicians believe their patients perceive the disease, providing opportunities for further engagement and education. The survey was supported by Ironwood Pharmaceuticals.

About Hyperuricemia and Gout

Gout is a highly symptomatic and painful form of inflammatory arthritis affecting an estimated eight million people in the U.S. It is caused by an underlying metabolic disorder, hyperuricemia - high levels of uric acid in the blood - and can lead to painful flares, characterized by excruciating pain, inflammation, swelling and tenderness in one or more joints. Gout is commonly hereditary and not only a lifestyle disease. While diet and lifestyle changes are important in managing gout and its comorbidities, they are often not enough to get patient serum uric acid (sUA) levels to target.

Approximately four million patients are treated with a xanthine oxidase inhibitor (XOI), either allopurinol or febuxostat, for gout in the U.S. Of these, an estimated two million patients are uncontrolled and are not achieving target serum uric acid (sUA) levels < 6 mg/dL as recommended by the American College of Rheumatology, despite treatment with an XOI alone. These patients continue to suffer from flares despite treatment with an XOI alone, and may face serious long-term consequences that can result from having uncontrolled sUA levels.

More information about gout is available at www.goutisserious.com.

About Ironwood Pharmaceuticals

Ironwood Pharmaceuticals (NASDAQ: IRWD) is a commercial biotechnology company focused on creating medicines that make a difference for patients, building value for our fellow shareholders, and empowering our passionate team. We are advancing a pipeline of innovative medicines in areas of significant unmet need, including irritable bowel syndrome with constipation (IBS-C)/chronic idiopathic constipation (CIC), uncontrolled gout, refractory gastroesophageal reflux disease, and vascular and fibrotic diseases. We discovered, developed and are commercializing linaclotide, the U.S. branded prescription market leader in the IBS-C/CIC category, and we are applying our proven R&D and commercial capabilities to advance multiple internally-developed and externally-accessed product opportunities. Ironwood was founded in 1998 and is headquartered in Cambridge, Mass. For more information, please visit www.ironwoodpharma.com or www.twitter.com/ironwoodpharma; information that may be important to investors will be routinely posted in both these locations.

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