Potential unmet need for gout diagnosis and treatment: capture-recapture analysis of a national administrative dataset

Authors: Jackson G et al

Summary: The undercount of adults aged ≥20 years diagnosed with gout in New Zealand was estimated using capture-recapture analysis of administrative data sets. The crude prevalence of diagnosed gout in 2009 was 3.75% based on hospitalisation and drug dispensing claims for allopurinol or colchicines. The covariate-adjusted capture-recapture estimate of those not recorded but likely to have gout was 0.92%, giving an overall estimated prevalence of gout of 4.67% (95% CI 4.49 to 4.90%). The undercount of gout diagnoses is therefore about 20% and represents ‘an aspect of unmet need in the population.’ After capture-recapture, gout prevalence for all males aged ≥20 years was 7.3% compared with a prevalence of >30% in Māori and Pacific men ≥65 years. The authors concluded that undiagnosed patients need to be identified and treated specifically for gout.

Comment: Two key messages here – firstly that the prevalence of gout is high in Aotearoa and in Māori. Secondly, that of all people with gout, 20% have not been formally diagnosed or received best-practice care. Capture-recapture may not be practical for all; and other methods to identify people with gout should be considered. Examples include working with local pharmacies to refer people seeking over-the-counter treatments or screening questionnaires in at-risk populations.

Reference: Rheumatology 2012;51(10):1820-1824
http://rheumatology.oxfordjournals.org/content/51/10/1820

Independent commentary by Dr Matire Harwood

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