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MART strategy vs ICS/LABA with SABA (SAMA) as rescue: a real life cross sectional study

Asthma - management, Treatments, Anti-inflammatory

F. Louis¹, F. Guissard², V. Paulus², C. Sanchez², G. Philippe¹, R. Louis², F. Schleich²

¹Department of Pharmacy - Liège (Belgium), ²Department of Pneumology - Liège (Belgium)

Introduction : The combination ICS/Formoterol as maintenance and reliever treatment (MART) is recommended by the GINA as the first treatment track for asthma and allow to reduce asthma exacerbations. There are no data on the use of rescue bronchodilators in real life in patients treated with the combination ICS/Formoterol outside the clinical trial PRACTICAL.

Methods : We conducted a retrospective cross sectional study over a 12 years period (2011-2023) on 444 patients recruited from our asthma clinic of CHU Liege and receiving ICS/Formoterol treatment. We compared the demographics, lung function and airway inflammation parameters of the patients who practice the MART strategy with the patients who received ICS/LABA as maintenance treatment and SABA/SAMA as rescue treatment. Overuse was defined as a score ≥ 3 at the item 6 of the Asthma Control Questionnaire.

Results : Overall, 48 % kept using SABA or SABA/SAMA as rescue bronchodilators while 46% used the MART strategy and 6% used AIR strategy. The proportion of patients displaying overuse of rescue medications was 16% in the ICS/Formoterol + SABA/SAMA group while it was only 3% in the ICS/Formoterol MART group ($p < 0.0001$). Comparing those on MART vs those using ICS/Formoterol + SABA/SAMA it turned out that patients on MART had a lower BMI ($p < 0.05$), less exacerbations in the previous 12 months ($p < 0.01$), greater ACT score and FEV₁% predicted (< 0.0001 for both), but similar sputum eosinophilic counts.

Conclusion : Patients on MART Strategy in real life have better asthma control and lung function compared to those keeping SABA/SAMA as rescue treatment.