

Are steroids used too much for patients with inflammatory bowel disease?

October 9 2019

Steroid therapy is commonly used to treat acute attacks of the inflammatory bowel diseases ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease; however, because it does not provide long-term benefits and it carries a risk of serious side effects, it should not be used to treat inflammatory bowel disease for more than three months.

In a large study published in *Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, researchers at 19 centres in the UK report that, among 2,385 patients with [inflammatory bowel disease](#), 14.8% showed evidence of steroid excess or dependency, and the steroid excess was judged avoidable in over 50% of cases.

The seven centres that had participated in a quality improvement programme had significantly fewer patients (11.5% versus 17.1%) receiving excess steroids.

"Looking at steroid prescribing for inflammatory bowel disease and trying to reduce steroid excess can be a powerful way to improve [patient care](#) and outcomes," said lead author Christian P. Selinger, MD, MSc, MRCP, of St. James University Hospital.

More information: Christian P. Selinger et al, Assessment of steroid use as a key performance indicator in inflammatory bowel disease- analysis of data from 2385 UK patients, *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/apt.15497](https://doi.org/10.1111/apt.15497)

Provided by Wiley

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