Attitudes towards Insulin Therapy of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients with Indication for Oral Anti-hyperglycemic Drugs

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Background: Despite unsuccessful achieving of glycemic target, optimizing blood sugar control by starting insulin is delayed. Understanding patients’ concern is a key for overcoming insulin inertia.

Objective: To explore attitudes towards insulin therapy in type 2 diabetic patients who failed to control blood sugar with oral anti-hyperglycemic drugs.

Methods: A questionnaire-based survey, descriptive study was conducted in internal medicine’s outpatient department of Siriraj Hospital. The questionnaire contained questions about demographic information, current diabetic treatment and attitude towards insulin therapy, including four positive and thirty negative statements. Patients were asked to indicate on 5-point Likert scale to what extent they agreed with each statement from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Results: A total of 130 patients were enrolled. Mean age of the patients was 70 years and 40% were male. Average duration of diabetes was 11 years. Mean HbA1C was 9%. Most of them perceived that they had fair glycemic control. Common concerns about insulin therapy were shown. The majority perceived insulin injection as symbol of personal failure for controlling diabetes. About 62% agreed with “use of insulin means my diabetes is worsened”. While, 65% thought that insulin was last resource of diabetic treatment and 70% remarked that using of insulin represented the failure of controlling diabetes. For the concerning about injection related anxiety, 65% were afraid of self-injection by needle and 66% lacked of confidence in ability to manage insulin therapy. Furthermore, 63% believed that changing from oral anti-hyperglycemic agent to insulin injection therapy was unnecessary. Moreover, 61% worried about carrying insulin in public area and stated that taking insulin may cause family to be more concerned.

Conclusion: Patients’ misconceptions and their negative perceptions to insulin treatment can influence the decision to initiate insulin treatment. Fear of injection and unfamiliar with insulin device are also the obstacles. Patients’ education and improving insulin devices are suggested to overcome these barriers and enhance healthcare services to early achieve target level of glycemic control.

Keywords: Attitudes, Insulin