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Drug compliance after stroke and myocardial infarction: Is complementary medicine an issue?

Sir,

I read with great interest the study by Shafqat *et al.*, comparing compliance with medications in patients with myocardial infarction and stroke.^[1]

Though this study showed that there was a lower rate of compliance in patients with stroke, the authors do not satisfactorily explain this discrepancy. The degree of disability of the respondents was not assessed in this study. In clinical experience, the extent of recovery after stroke is an important factor that affects compliance with drugs. In our setting a poor response may be construed as a lack of efficacy and hence may in several instances lead to discontinuation of the drug. This phenomenon also leads to patients seeking treatment from practitioners of complementary medicine. It has been shown in a recent study that complementary medicine usage may lead to non-compliance with modern medicine.^[2] This is more so for patients with incurable or ineffectually treated diseases such as stroke.

I think health-educational strategies, along with increasing awareness regarding secondary prevention, should also address the issue of complementary medicine use and encourage people to continue regular medications even while seeking alternative medicine.

Pavan Bhargava

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