

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

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| TITLE (PROVISIONAL) | The state of the art of chronic spontaneous urticaria in Italy: a multicenter survey to evaluate physicians' and patients' perspective |
| AUTHORS | Rimoldi, Marco; Rossi, Oliviero; Rota, Nadia |

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

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| REVIEWER | Marcus Maurer Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin Germany I receive honoraria for advise and/or lectures and/or institutional research funding from Novartis, Genentech, Uriach, Sanofi, FAES and MOXIE. |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 26-Apr-2016 |

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| GENERAL COMMENTS | <p>The questions addressed by this study are important and the results are interesting and relevant.</p> <p>The authors' statement (abstract) that the survey results from 160 allergy and 160 dermatology specialists show that specialists see a median of 40 (interquartile range [IQR] 20–80) patients/year is not correct. The authors probably refer to chronic spontaneous urticaria patients, chronic urticaria patients, or urticaria patients.</p> <p>The authors state, in the abstract, that most specialists (56%) know the CSU guidelines. The authors should specify which guidelines they refer to.</p> <p>In the subsequent sentence, the authors state that this (knowledge of the guideline) is reflected in treatment choices. To substantiate this, the authors are advised to explore if specialists who know the guidelines / follow them regularly make different treatment choices than those who do not.</p> <p>The authors state that urticaria is a disease characterized by the spontaneous development of wheals (papules or plaques), angioedema or both, that is associated with itching, a burning sensation and/or pain. The authors are advised to change the wording as it implies that angioedema is associated with itching, which is not the case in many patients as the authors correctly state late in this paragraph. Its the wheals that are itchy.</p> <p>The authors state that patients with CSU frequently lack an underlying cause. This is not correct, what is lacking is the knowledge of and the ability to identify the underlying cause.</p> <p>What is a C.A.W.I. system platform?</p> |
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| | <p>The authors should make the survey available to the readers, e.g. as an online repository.</p> <p>The manuscript would benefit from thorough proof reading (comma rules, format, spelling, some style issues).</p> |
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| REVIEWER | Mariateresa Ventura University of Bari Italy |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 10-Jun-2016 |

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| GENERAL COMMENTS | <p>The study is interesting and deserves publication on BMJ Open. The authors show good knowledge of EAACI/GA2LEN/EDF/WAO urticaria guidelines published on Allergy (2014). This concept must be stressed in the introduction by explaining that the study was conducted according to the updated guidelines. A mention to the paper should be done to support the comparison with the guidelines parameters carried out in results and in the discussion.</p> <p>It is not specified who has prepared the questionnaires and if they have been validated or approved by a scientific society.</p> <p>The characteristics of the centers which have drawn the questionnaires are not specified: (only the centers with the highest number of patients) The allergological/dermatological centers have been asked the number of the visited patients with urticaria.</p> <p>Which questionnaire on the quality of life have been selected?</p> <p>Few sentences that are correlated to the results should be removed from the discussion and moved to the appropriate topic.</p> |
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name: Marcus Maurer

Institution and Country: Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany Competing Interests: I receive honoraria for advise and/or lectures and/or institutional research funding from Novartis, Genentech, Uriach, Sanofi, FAES and MOXIE.

The questions addressed by this study are important and the results are interesting and relevant.

The authors' statement (abstract) that the survey results from 160 allergy and 160 dermatology specialists show that specialists see a median of 40 (interquartile range [IQR] 20–80) patients/year is not correct. The authors probably refer to chronic spontaneous urticaria patients, chronic urticaria patients, or urticaria patients.

Response: Thank you for this comment. We have corrected the abstract specifying they are CSU patients.

The authors state, in the abstract, that most specialists (56%) know the CSU guidelines. The authors should specify which guidelines they refer to.

Response: We have specified the various guidelines the specialists refer to in the Results – Specialist perspective section (page 10 of the manuscript), and we also added a new figure detailing this point (new Fig. 2).

In the subsequent sentence, the authors state that this (knowledge of the guideline) is reflected in treatment choices. To substantiate this, the authors are advised to explore if specialists who know the

guidelines / follow them regularly make different treatment choices than those who do not.

Response: Thank you very much for this comment. In fact the differences between specialists who know and use regularly the guidelines and those who do not are clearly apparent. We added a paragraph to the Results section detailing this (page 11 of the manuscript).

The authors state that urticaria is a disease characterized by the spontaneous development of wheals (papules or plaques), angioedema or both, that is associated with itching, a burning sensation and/or pain. The authors are advised to change the wording as it implies that angioedema is associated with itching, which is not the case in many patients as the authors correctly state late in this paragraph. Its the wheals that are itchy.

Response: This part was modified as suggested (page 4 of the manuscript).

The authors state that patients with CSU frequently lack an underlying cause. This is not correct, what is lacking is the knowledge of and the ability to identify the underlying cause.

Response: This part was modified as suggested (page 4-5 of the manuscript).

What is a C.A.W.I. system platform?

Response: C.A.W.I. is the acronym of Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing; it is a platform for conducting internet surveys with structured questions.

The authors should make the survey available to the readers, e.g. as an online repository.

Response: The blank survey forms, both in Italian and English, are provided as supplementary material. As for the online repository, it could certainly be done, but the full survey results are very large excel files and only the Italian-language versions could be provided.

The manuscript would benefit from thorough proof reading (comma rules, format, spelling, some style issues).

Response: This has been done as suggested.

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name: Mariateresa Ventura

Institution and Country: University of Bari Italy Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

The study is interesting and deserves publication on BMJ Open. The authors show good knowledge of EAACI/GA2LEN/EDF/WAO urticaria guidelines published on Allergy (2014). This concept must be stressed in the introduction by explaining that the study was conducted according to the updated guidelines. A mention to the paper should be done to support the comparison with the guidelines parameters carried out in results and in the discussion.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The EAACI/GA2LEN/EDF/WAO urticaria guidelines are of considerable importance and, while our study was not actually conducted with reference to the updated guidelines (it had been designed before the publication of the guidelines themselves), acknowledgment of the paper is done in many points of the Introduction and Discussion sections.

It is not specified who has prepared the questionnaires and if they have been validated or approved by a scientific society.

Response: The survey was designed by Stethos Marketing Research srl, Milan, Italy; although it was tested with pilot interviews to specialists, it was neither formally validated nor approved by a scientific society.

The characteristics of the centers which have drawn the questionnaires are not specified: (only the centers with the highest number of patients) The allergological/dermatological centers have been

asked the number of the visited patients with urticaria.

Response: The main criterion for the selection of the centers was the most extensive experience in the treatment of patients with CSU (and therefore the highest number of patients). At the same time, care was taken to ensure that centers and specialists from Northern, Central and Southern Italy were equally represented.

Which questionnaire on the quality of life have been selected?

Response: No specific questionnaires on QoL were used.

Few sentences that are correlated to the results should be removed from the discussion and moved to the appropriate topic.

Response: We deleted some parts of the discussion, especially numerical values, which in fact belonged to the results section; thank you for having pointed it out.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

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| REVIEWER | Marcus Maurer Dpt. of Dermatology and Allergy Allergie-Centrum-Charité Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin Charitéplatz 1 * 10117 Berlin * Germany I receive honoraria for advise and/or lectures and/or institutional research funding from Novartis, Genentech, Uriach, Sanofi, FAES and MOXIE. |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 21-Jul-2016 |

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| GENERAL COMMENTS | The authors have adequately addressed all of points of concern. |
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| REVIEWER | Maria Teresa Ventura University of Bari, Italy |
| REVIEW RETURNED | 22-Jul-2016 |

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| GENERAL COMMENTS | The authors show good knowledge of EAACI/GA2LEN/EDF/WAO urticaria guidelines published on Allergy (2014). The work is original (never described in the literature) and well conducted. The discussion is satisfactory. The amended manuscript is suitable for publication on BMJ Open |
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