Treatment of latent tuberculosis with rifampicin is associated with higher completion rates

In this retrospective study, medical records of 2255 patients who received treatment for latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) at a US centre between January 1999 and January 2004 were reviewed. Adherence to LTBI treatment was compared between two groups of patients. One group (843 patients) received isoniazid for 9 months and the other (1412 patients) received rifampicin for 4 months.

In the isoniazid group 52.6% of patients completed 80% or more of the LTBI treatment, compared with 71.6% of the rifampicin group (p<0.001). However, similar percentages of people completed 4 months’ of treatment in both groups. Adverse reactions leading to discontinuation of treatment by the clinician were higher in the isoniazid group (4.6%) compared with the rifampicin group (1.9%, p<0.001) and this result was not explained by greater duration of exposure to isoniazid.

This study shows significantly higher adherence to LTBI treatment with a 4 month regime of rifampicin compared with 9 months of isoniazid. Further studies are warranted to look at the efficacy of rifampicin in the treatment of LTBI.

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