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Reply to Dr. Lai regarding Allopurinol Hypersensitivity Syndrome in patients of Asian ancestry

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Sir,

We thank Dr Lai for their interest in our study (1). While we did not show a statistically significant link between the use of allopurinol and mortality in people with gout, we agree that Allopurinol Hypersensitivity Syndrome (AHS) is the most serious side-effect of allopurinol, particularly in populations with South East Asian ancestry, leading to the recommendation to screen people of South East Asian descent for the HLA-B*5801 allele prior to starting treatment with allopurinol (2,3).

While AHS can be fatal, its incidence is low. One study reported an incidence of AHS in a large South East Asian sample of 4.68 per 1000 new users of allopurinol and related mortality of 0.39 per 1000 new users (4).

Investigation of the mortality risk from AHS was outside the purview of our study, which aimed to compare all-cause and cardiovascular mortality between allopurinol users and non-users, but we agree AHS is an important consideration for all clinicians managing gout, of which all patients starting allopurinol should be made aware.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest

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