

Review of: "[Short Communication] Advisory caution message on retail packaging of Levothyroxine and its significance in the treatment of hypothyroidism"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Professor Thakir presents startling figures in his article. Do one in three patients in India suffer from hypothyroidism, or more correctly from a thyroid disorder? This is surely a misconception. Although epidemiological data in the developed world is sparse and of poor quality, estimates of the prevalence of hypothyroidism are perhaps in the range 1–3%.

Also he implies that in India many cases of subclinical hypothyroidism are inappropriately treated with thyroxine prescribed by General Practitioners. He has personally encountered patients on inappropriate high doses of thyroxine. He describes their symptoms, but he did not include manifestations of chronic over-dosage such as tachycardia, atrial fibrillation, and osteoporosis with the risk of fractures.

I agree unreservedly with his recommendation that the 'Advisory Caution' is inscribed on retail packages of thyroxine soon. This will help to prevent over-dosage and we will educate doctors and their patients.

Surely it is important also to educate pharmacists who see these patients face-to-face or who dispense the medications on-line. The Department of Health and Family Welfare, and the Department of Pharmaceuticals, should be asked intervene.

He cites two important literature references. One is a literature review of 21 randomised trials and emphatically confirms that treating patients with Subclinical Hypothyroidism (SCH) does not improve quality of life or thyroid-related symptoms.

The other paper from an international guideline panel firmly states that adults with SCH will not benefit and may experience harm from overtreatment with thyroid hormones.

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