

A. Colin Buck

## **Gout—the “at your finger tips” guide by R. Grahame, H.A. Simmonds, E. Carrey**

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Possibly sometime in the late Miocene epoch, (13 million to 5 million years ago), our humanoid ancestors, uniquely in the mammalian kingdom, lost the uricase gene that converts uric acid to soluble allantoin. Meat eating man fell prey to the scourge of hyperuricaemia and gout whilst the vegetarian ape remains immune. Gout, once considered to be an affliction of the corpulent, overindulgent, bibulous, rich upper class, has today, with the universal over consumption of purine-rich foods and alcohol, become a growing epidemic in the affluent world. Gout is the most common form of inflammatory arthritis in men, affecting at least 1% of men in western countries, with a male to female ratio ranging from 7:1 to 9:1.

Gout—the ‘at your finger tips’ guide by Professor Rodney Grahame and Drs. Anne Simmonds and Elizabeth Carrey is a monograph aimed principally at the gout sufferer. Couched in a ‘Questions and Answers’ format, in simple language, it comprehensively addresses every aspect of the aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of the condition that no patient reading it could fail to be better informed. It covers, not only the medical aspects of the disease, but also provides valuable practical help and advice on how to cope with the crippling incapacitation of an acute attack as well as living with the restricted mobility imposed by the slow destruction and deformity of the joints of the chronic gout sufferer. There is little doubt that hyperuricaemia and gout are diet related. The recent study by Choi et al. [1] examining the dietary risk

factors for gout in 47,150 men found that an additional portion of meat per day increased the risk by 21% and an additional portion of seafood per week by 7%. There is a useful guide in this book to purine-rich animal and vegetable foods that the patient would do well to avoid and emphasises the importance of fluids, especially in dehydrating situations that can so easily precipitate an attack. Almost 50% of hyperuricosuric gout patients will form uric acid stones. However, overproduction of urate and persistently acid urine also increase the risk of calcium oxalate urolithiasis.

Inherited disorders of purine metabolism are mercifully extremely rare, and the severe forms are devastating for both the patient and the family. The chapter ‘Gout in young people’ deals with these syndromes in depth and with sensitivity to the imponderable dilemmas that parents face.

In an age when patients want to be better informed, but the pressures of a busy professional life rob one of the benefits of unhurried patient contact, a book, such as this, that answers all the questions is an invaluable boon for both patient and doctor.

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### **References**

1. Choi HK, Atkinson K, Karlson EW, Willett W, Curhan G (2004) Purine-rich foods, dairy and protein intake, and the risk of gout in men. *N Engl J Med* 350:1093

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A. C. Buck  
Lately Consultant Urologist,  
Glasgow Royal Infirmary,  
Department of Urology,  
Glasgow, UK  
E-mail: a-colinbuck@supanet.com