

Sulphonylureas: Do we need to introspect safety again?

Devindra Sehra

Sehra Medical Centre, India

Abstract

Introduction: Sulphonylureas (SUs) are commonly prescribed medications for type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) worldwide. Differences among SUs for kinetic and adenosine triphosphate sensitive potassium (KATP) channels selectivity and consequential extra pancreatic effects, though recognized in literature, are not considered by treatment guidelines.

Areas Covered: The role of SUs in various systems related adverse effects have not been well understood. Inconsistencies in literature and lack of clinical trials assessing the long-term effects of monotherapy or combination therapy with SUs add to the concern. This review provides insights in issues concerning safety of SUs based on literature published between 1980-2011. A comprehensive search was carried out on PubMed, Embase & Cochrane databases using search terms viz. sulphonylureas, sulphonylureas and KATP channels, sulphonylureas & cardiovascular effects, sulphonylureas side effects etc.

Expert Opinion: SUs have been linked to CV events, growth hormone (GH) disorder, malignancy, weight gain and CNS adverse effects. These adverse effects generally get masked as they are thought to be related to diabetes per se. The current article will allow the fraternity to ponder and undertake further research on the ill effects of largely prescribed anti-diabetic medication.