Weight Loss Possible in SLE Patients on Steroids

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LONDON — Significant weight loss is possible in obese patients with systemic lupus erythematosus being treated with corticosteroids, Siaw Ing Yeo, M.D., said at the Sixth European Lupus Meeting.

This was demonstrated in a study that compared simple calorie restriction with a low–glycemic-index diet. In this type of diet, patients avoid refined carbohydrates, consuming only low–glycemic-index complex carbohydrates—those that have little immediate effect on blood glucose—and higher amounts of protein and fat.

The study randomly assigned 23 women aged 18-65 years whose body mass index was 25 or greater and who were on a stable dose of prednisolone of 5-20 mg/day to one of the two diets for 6 weeks.

There were significant weight reductions in both groups, with a mean weight loss of 2.44 kg in the low-calorie group and a mean of 4 kg in the low–glycemic-index group, Dr. Yeo said in a poster session at the meeting, sponsored by the British Society for Rheumatology.

Fasting LDL, HDL, triglycerides, glucose, insulin, C-reactive protein, fibrinogen, and homocysteine levels did not alter significantly on either diet. Fasting urate levels showed a trend toward improvement in the low-calorie group and remained unchanged in the low–glycemic-index diet, said Dr. Yeo of the lupus research unit at the Rayne Institute, St. Thomas' Hospital, London.

Constipation was reported by 50% of patients in the low–glycemic-index group, while increased bowel frequency and bloating were reported by 25% of those in the low-calorie group.

A surprising additional finding was that patients in both groups reported significant improvements on the fatigue severity score. Finally, neither diet was associated with a disease flare, she said. ■