Is chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine superior to placebo in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis?

We read with interest the article by Hochberg et al\textsuperscript{1} related to the efficacy and safety of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine hydrochloride (CS+GH) versus celecoxib in patients with knee osteoarthritis and severe pain. The study suggested that CS+GH has comparable efficacy to celecoxib in reducing pain, stiffness, functional limitation and joint swelling/effusion after 6 months with a good safety profile. These results were ‘promising’. We really appreciate the work that was done by the authors. However, there are worthwhile issues that need to be explored.

The study was designed as a non-inferiority trial without placebo arm. The authors explained that, ‘The use of a placebo group was not considered appropriate for ethical and methodological reasons’. We agree with this. The authors added that the use of placebo arm was not considered necessary as the Glucosamine/Chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT) already compared both active treatments (CS+GH and celecoxib) with placebo and came to a conclusion that a subset of participants with more severe baseline pain appeared to benefit by use of CS+GH as compared with placebo.\textsuperscript{2} However, a subsequent GAIT report clearly pointed out that none of the contributions of the authors and we are very much looking forward to the follow-up results of this study.

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