Introduction Azathioprine, an important immunomodulator in the management of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), has potential serious side-effects about which patients should have awareness.

Aims/Background The aim was to assess understanding of side-effects of azathioprine in patients with IBD.

Method A 10-question survey was completed anonymously by IBD patients attending St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin. Information received prior to treatment, side-effect awareness and blood monitoring data were collated.

Results 96 patients completed questionnaires (52% male, 48% female). Fifty-nine (61%) patients had Crohn's disease, 33 (34%) ulcerative colitis, and 4 indeterminate colitis. Sixty-two (65%) received information about azathioprine from their physician (23% written, 37% verbal, 39% written and verbal). 83 (93%) patients took their medication daily. 61 (71%) were aware of the complication of low WBC count. Eighty-nine (93%) had blood monitoring, but frequency varied. Awareness of other side-effects was lower (38% skin rash, 30% pancreatitis, and 36% lymphoma). Thirty-eight (40%) patients had felt unwell while taking azathioprine. 34% of patients who had felt unwell on azathioprine visited their GP; only one-third had blood tests.

Conclusion Although compliance with azathioprine was high, only 65% of patients recalled receiving information on azathioprine side-effects. Most patients had monitoring for neutropenia, but frequency varied. Awareness of important side-effects (lymphoma) was low. These findings emphasize the importance of reminding patients of the side-effects of azathioprine, and blood monitoring. The use of smart phones with 'apps', in these young patients, may be helpful as reminders of adverse effects and blood monitoring.

60 AWARENESS OF ADVERSE EFFECTS OF AZATHIOPRINE AMONG PATIENTS WITH INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

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