

## 2023 Belgian consensus on *Helicobacter pylori* treatment, yet another (Belgian) guideline

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### To the Editor,

The Belgian *Helicobacter* and Microbiota Study Group (BHMSG) welcomes the publication of their new Belgian consensus on the treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* (Hp) in the *Acta Gastro-Enterologica Belgica*. Vol 86, January-March (74-91), 2023 (1).

We carried out a survey through a questionnaire on the treatment habits of Belgian practitioners at the end of 2020. This 30 questions survey was distributed through the Belgian professional associations of gastroenterology and general practitioners. 138 responses were received in total, including 95 Belgian and 43 African physicians. The Belgian group contains a Dutch-speaking (60) and French-speaking (35) subgroup. Ten percent of the responders do screen for Hp infection while under proton pump inhibitor treatment. When discontinued, only 54% respect the minimum recommended pause of treatment of 14 days. During esophagogastroduodenoscopy 22% does not perform random gastric biopsies in case of normal appearing gastric mucosa. Biopsies are taken in accordance with international recommendations in only 36% of cases. Hp serology is sometimes still used to screen for active Hp infection, especially in the African subgroup of physicians. In the French-speaking Belgian

group of practitioners, 28% uses Hp culture as the first line diagnostic test. A difference between the Belgian and African group is only observed in the use of noninvasive tests ( $p=0.013$ ), in eradication control ( $p=0.004$ ) and in the screening for Hp before bariatric surgery. There are no significant differences in the management of Hp infection between Belgian and African practitioners.

The survey results show there is a gap in several aspects between international guidelines and real-life. We concluded that the management of Hp infection by Belgian gastroenterologists is heterogeneous, sub-optimal and often in contradiction with current recommendations in accordance with a recent publication by our Spanish colleagues (2). Guidelines disseminated at a national level might be more likely to be followed, in order to improve adherence.

### References

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