

Original Article

Safety assessment of canagliflozin for type 2 diabetes mellitus

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Abstract: Importance: Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) is chronic, progressive, heavy-burden disease. The efficacy of canagliflozin for T2DM has been well validated, but its safety profile still remains controversial. Objective: This systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized control trials was performed to assess the safety of canagliflozin, the first approved sodium glucose co-transporter 2 receptor inhibitors (SGLT2), in T2DM patients. Data sources: PubMed, EMBASE, clinicaltrials.gov, and the Cochrane Library. Study selection: Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of canagliflozin in T2DM patients by February 2015 utilizing the key words "canagliflozin", "JNJ-28431754", "TA-7284" and "invokana" with no language, origin or other limits were screened and selected. Data extraction and synthesis: Review Manager 5.0.24 was used to conduct the meta-analysis. Main outcomes and measures: Genital infection. Results: A total of 14 RCTs were included for meta-analysis. Canagliflozin significantly increase the risk of genital infection [RR=4.80; 95% CI (3.80-6.07); $P < 0.00001$; $I^2=0\%$], vulvovaginal mycotic infection [RR=7.66, 95% CI (3.04, 19.29), $P < 0.001$; $I^2=0\%$], osmotic diuresis related AEs [RR=2.95; 95% CI (2.26-3.85); $P < 0.00001$; $I^2=0\%$] and nausea [RR=2.36; 95% CI (1.24-4.50); $P=0.009$; $I^2=0\%$]. Canagliflozin slightly increase the risk of volume depletion related AEs [RR=1.36; 95% CI (0.99-1.88); $P=0.06$; $I^2=0\%$], upper respiratory inflammation [RR=1.29; 95% CI (0.73-2.27); $P=0.39$; $I^2=0\%$] and hypoglycaemia [RR=1.40; 95% CI (0.70-2.79); $P=0.34$; $I^2=0\%$]. Canagliflozin did not increase the risk of urinary tract infection [risk ratio (RR)=1.11; 95% CI (0.94-1.29); $P=0.21$; $I^2=0\%$], severe hypoglycaemia [RR=1.01; 95% CI (0.67-1.52); $P=0.96$; $I^2=0\%$], GI related AEs [RR=1.11; 95% CI (0.78-1.59); $P=0.55$; $I^2=0\%$], headache [RR=1.18; 95% CI (0.76-1.82); $P=0.46$; $I^2=0\%$] or dizziness [RR=1.01; 95% CI (0.45-2.28); $P=0.98$; $I^2=0\%$]. Canagliflozin was associated with a lightly lower risk of diarrhoea [RR=0.66; 95% CI (0.36-1.18); $P=0.16$; $I^2=0\%$], death [RR 0.84; 95% CI (0.40-1.76); $P=0.64$; $I^2=0\%$] and nasopharyngitis [RR 0.81; 95% CI (0.58-1.13); $P=0.21$; $I^2=0\%$]. Conclusions and relevance: Canagliflozin is relatively safe for treatment of T2DM patients either in monotherapy or add-on treatment, but the increased risk of genital infection, osmotic diuresis related AEs and nausea should not be neglected. More long-term clinical trials are required to refine this evidence.

Keywords: Canagliflozin, type 2 diabetes mellitus, sodium-glucose transporter-2 inhibitor, safety

Introduction

Diabetes has become the seventh cause of death in America, and 8.3% Americans were reported to have diabetes [1]. Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) accounts for 90% diabetes, and the incidence trend will have a significant increase in the next two decades [2]. Patients with T2DM are resistant to insulin and have a great decrease in glucose-stimulated insulin secretion [3]. These features are associated with the insensitivity of the insulin receptor and the impairment of insulin signaling [4].

Management of T2DM includes diet and exercise, followed by monotherapy with anti-hyperglycemic agents (AHAs) when lifestyle intervention is inadequate [2, 5]. However, many patients didn't achieve expected goals with first-line therapy like metformin, thus a combination therapy with a second glycaemia-control agent like sulphonylureas, thiazolidinediones or even insulin is often required [6, 7]. Despite achieving a long-term glucose level control, many of these combination therapy lead to severe insulin resistance and a large amount of complications [8], which make the tolerability and safety

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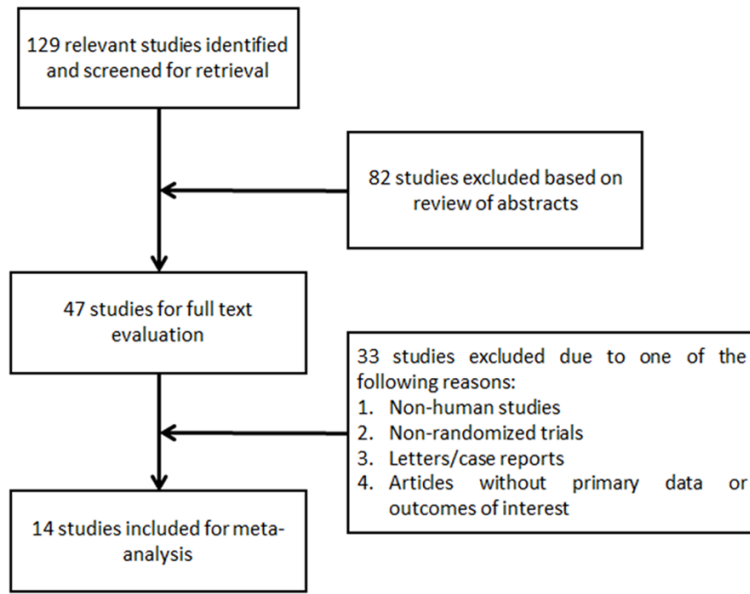


Figure 1. The flow and the results of study selection

of these medications highly concerned. In this regard, a new class of AHAs which can both control the blood glucose level while combined with less complications is strongly expected [9].

Sodium-linked glucose transporter 2 (SGLT2), with an insulin-independent mechanism, is newly developed and may be proved as an attractive alternation [10-12]. SGLT2 is mainly expressed in the early proximal renal tubule, and induces glucose excretion via urine by reducing ingested calories, at the same time achieve good blood glucose control [9]. In April 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved canagliflozin as the first SGLT2 class agent for the treatment of T2DM [13]. Canagliflozin is proved to decrease the renal threshold for glucose, thus reduce plasma glucose level and body weight without causing hypoglycemia [1, 10].

Previously, three meta-analysis [14] analyzing the efficacy and safety of the SGLT2 inhibitors (including canagliflozin) for the treatment of T2DM were conducted. However, in Clar and Musso's study [15, 16], only one randomized controlled trial (RCT) on canagliflozin is included. The efficacy of canagliflozin has been well validated for the treatment of T2DM, but some safety concerns still remain and no pooled analysis of large robust studies with long dura-

tion outcomes was available to clarify this issue [9, 17-19]. The purpose of this meta-analysis is to fully illustrate the clinical safety of canagliflozin as either monotherapy or with other background treatment in T2DM patients.

Methods

Data sources and searches

An exhaustive online search was conducted on mainstream computerized databases of interest, they are: PubMed, MEDLINE, Embase, ClinicalTrials.gov and Cochrane Collaborative database by February 2015. The search terms were "canagliflozin", "JNJ-28431754", "TA-72-

84" and "invokana" with no language, origin or other limits. All the retrieved articles were scanned and all additional studies of potential interest were imported into Endnote for further identification and analysis.

Study selection

Inclusion criteria were following the Population Intervention Comparison Outcome (PICO) strategy [20], which were conducted as follows. P: participants were adults of any sex or ethnic origin, who had T2DM and were not adequately-controlled with diet, exercise, or other anti-hyperglycemia drugs like metformin and (or) sulphonylurea and (or) pioglitazone and (or) insulin; I: treatment with canagliflozin; C: comparison with placebo or active comparators such as metformin, glimepiride and sitagliptin; O: rate of the adverse events (AEs) was analyzed to evaluate the safety outcomes. Exclusion criteria were: non-human studies, non-randomized trials, letters/case reports, articles without primary data or outcomes of interest.

Two authors (Yifan Liu and Yuxin Zhang) independently reviewed the titles and abstracts of references extracted from the searches and identified potentially relevant studies. Two reviewers (Ruoshuang Han and Yuxin Zhang) independently analyzed the list of references

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Table 1. Characteristics of randomized controlled trials included in the meta-analysis

Author (year) (citation)	Phase n study, NCT	n patients, age (y), BMI (kg/m ²)	Mean initial HbA1c (%)	Duration of T2DM (y)	Canagliflozin dose vs. drug	Background treatment	Treatment duration (weeks)
Rosenstock (2013)	3, NCT00642278	451, 52.9, 31.5	7.8	6	50 mg, 100 mg, 200 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	Metformin	12 w
Scherthaner (2013)	3, NCT01137812	756, 56.7, 31.6	8.1	9.6	300 mg vs. sitagliptin	Metformin Plus Sulfonylurea	52 w
Lavalle-González (2013)	3, NCT01106677	1284, 55.4, 31.8	7.9	6.9	100 mg, 300 mg vs sitagliptin	Metformin monotherapy	52 w
Forst (2014)	3, NCT01106690	342, 57.4, 32.5	7.9	10.5	100 mg, 300 mg vs placebo/sitagliptin	Metformin and pioglitazone	52 w
Inagaki (2013)	NCT01022112	382, 57.4, 25.7	8.1	-	50 mg, 100 mg, 200 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	Antidiabetic drugs	12 w
Li (2014)	NCT01381900	676, 56.2, 25.7	8.0	6.7	100 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	Metformin alone or Metformin Plus Sulfonylurea	18 w
Wilding (2013)	3, NCT01106625	469, 56.8, 33.1	8.1	9.6	100 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	Metformin plus sulphonylurea	52 w
Leiter (2014)	3, NCT00968812	1450, 56.2, 31.0	7.8	6.6	100 mg, 300 mg vs. glimepiride	Metformin	104 w
Bays (2014)	2b, NCT00650806	376, 44.8, 37	-	-	50 mg, 100 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	Nutritional counseling, limitation of calories and routine physical activity	12 w
Bode (2014)	3, NCT01106651	716, 63.6, 31.6	7.7	11.7	100 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	-	104 w
Nyiryjesy (2012)	2, NCT00642278	215, 52.9, 32.1	7.8	-	50 mg, 100 mg, 200 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo&sitagliptin	Metformin	12 w
Yale (2013)	3	272, 68.5, 33.0	8	16.3	100 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	AHA therapies at baseline	52 w
Devineni (2012)	1b	29, 48.5, 33.5	8.4	-	100 mg, 300 mg vs. placebo	Insulin and Metformin	4 w
Stenlöf (2014)	3, NCT01081834	587, 55.4, 31.6	8	4.3	Placebo/sitagliptin	Diet and exercise	52 w

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Table 2. Quality of evidence for clinically relevant outcomes

Outcomes	No of Participants (studies) Follow up	Quality of the evidence (GRADE)	Relative effect (95% CI)	Anticipated absolute effects	
				Risk with Control	Risk difference with Safety assessment of Canagliflozin (95% CI)
Genital infections	8930 (11 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖ MODERATE ¹ due to imprecision	OR 5.25 (4.12 to 6.69)	19 per 1000	Study population 73 more per 1000 (from 55 more to 96 more)
				18 per 1000	Moderate 70 more per 1000 (from 52 more to 91 more)
Osmotic diuresis related AEs	8930 (11 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ HIGH	OR 3.05 (2.32 to 4.01)	17 per 1000	Study population 32 more per 1000 (from 21 more to 47 more)
				15 per 1000	Moderate 29 more per 1000 (from 19 more to 43 more)
Volume depletion related AEs	8968 (12 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ HIGH	OR 1.37 (0.99 to 1.91)	14 per 1000	Study population 5 more per 1000 (from 0 fewer to 12 more)
				15 per 1000	Moderate 5 more per 1000 (from 0 fewer to 13 more)
Death	7402 (8 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ HIGH	OR 0.84 (0.39 to 1.78)	3 per 1000	Study population 1 fewer per 1000 (from 2 fewer to 3 more)
				4 per 1000	Moderate 1 fewer per 1000 (from 2 fewer to 3 more)
Severe hypoglycaemia	6836 (9 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ HIGH	OR 1.01 (0.67 to 1.53)	12 per 1000	Study population 0 more per 1000 (from 4 fewer to 6 more)
				6 per 1000	Moderate 0 more per 1000 (from 2 fewer to 3 more)
Urinary tract infection	8930 (11 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖ MODERATE ¹ due to imprecision	OR 1.11 (0.94 to 1.32)	63 per 1000	Study population 6 more per 1000 (from 4 fewer to 18 more)
				63 per 1000	Moderate 6 more per 1000 (from 4 fewer to 19 more)
Headache	1109 (3 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖ MODERATE ¹ due to imprecision	OR 1.2 (0.74 to 1.94)	61 per 1000	Study population 11 more per 1000 (from 15 fewer to 51 more)
				79 per 1000	Moderate 14 more per 1000 (from 19 fewer to 64 more)
GI related AEs	1642 (4 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖ MODERATE ¹ due to imprecision	OR 1.13 (0.76 to 1.68)	65 per 1000	Study population 8 more per 1000 (from 15 fewer to 40 more)
				40 per 1000	Moderate 5 more per 1000 (from 9 fewer to 25 more)
Nasopharyngitis	2014 (3 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊖ ⊖ LOW ^{1,2} due to imprecision, publication bias	OR 0.79 (0.55 to 1.14)	71 per 1000	Study population 14 fewer per 1000 (from 31 fewer to 9 more)
				34 per 1000	Moderate 7 fewer per 1000 (from 15 fewer to 5 more)
Upper respiratory inflammation	1162 (2 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖ MODERATE ^{1,2} due to imprecision	OR 1.3 (0.72 to 2.37)	34 per 1000	Study population 10 more per 1000 (from 9 fewer to 42 more)
				13 per 1000	Moderate 4 more per 1000 (from 4 fewer to 17 more)
Nausea	1109 (3 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ HIGH	OR 2.51 (1.26 to 5.03)	18 per 1000	Study population 26 more per 1000 (from 5 more to 68 more)
				23 per 1000	Moderate 33 more per 1000 (from 6 more to 83 more)
Diarrhoea	1109 (3 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖ MODERATE ¹ due to imprecision	OR 0.64 (0.35 to 1.19)	46 per 1000	Study population 16 fewer per 1000 (from 29 fewer to 8 more)
				56 per 1000	Moderate 19 fewer per 1000 (from 36 fewer to 10 more)
Dizziness	592 (2 studies)	⊕ ⊕ ⊖ ⊖ LOW ^{1,2} due to imprecision, publication bias	OR 1.01 (0.43 to 2.38)	35 per 1000	Study population 0 more per 1000 (from 20 fewer to 45 more)
				23 per 1000	Moderate 0 more per 1000 (from 13 fewer to 30 more)

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Hypoglycaemia	1679 (3 studies)	⊕⊕⊕⊖ MODERATE ^{1,2,3} due to imprecision	OR 1.41 (0.7 to 2.83)	12 per 1000	Study population 5 more per 1000 (from 4 fewer to 21 more) Moderate
				15 per 1000	6 more per 1000 (from 4 fewer to 26 more)

*The basis for the assumed risk (e.g. the median control group risk across studies) is provided in footnotes. The corresponding risk (and its 95% confidence interval) is based on the assumed risk in the comparison group and the relative effect of the intervention (and its 95% CI). CI: Confidence interval; OR: Odds ratio; GRADE Working Group grades of evidence. High quality: Further research is very unlikely to change our confidence in the estimate of effect. Moderate quality: Further research is likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the estimate of effect and may change the estimate. Low quality: Further research is very likely to have an important impact on our confidence in the estimate of effect and is likely to change the estimate. Very low quality: We are very uncertain about the estimate. ¹Unconformity. ²Publication bias. ³No explanation was provided.

and identified the RCTs of interests. The full-text articles were assessed by two authors (Xiaofei Guan and Yanjie Zhu). Any discrepancies of selection would be resolved by discussion until consensus was reached. If an agreement failed to reach by discussion, a third author (GuoxinFan) was consulted. Data was retrieved from included studies and entered into RevMan 5.0.24 for analysis.

Data extraction and quality assessment

Two reviewers (Ruoshuang Han and Guoxin Fan) independently extracted or check data in duplicate with a predefined protocol following the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Intervention; discrepancies were resolved by discussion. Study characteristics were extracted with Excel; the quality of RCTs was assessed by the Cochrane Risk-of-Bias Tool, attributing 1 point to each item (total score range: 0-8) [21]; the strength of evidence was evaluated using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach.

Data synthesis and analysis

This systematic review with meta-analysis was reported according to PRISMA guidelines [22]. We performed all the analyses using RevMan 5.0.24 (The Nordic Cochrane Centre, Copenhagen, Denmark) from Cochrane Collaboration, 2008). Dichotomous data (AEs) would be presented as relative risk (RR) with 95% confidence interval (CI), while continuous variables as weighed mean differences (MMD) with 95% CI. Treatments were evaluated on an intention-to-treat principle. Statistical heterogeneity was evaluated using I^2 statistic: if no heterogeneity ($I^2 < 50\%$) was detected, we would use a fixed-effect model; if significant heterogeneity was present ($I^2 \geq 50\%$), we would use a random-effect model along with the sensitive analysis

to investigate for possible explanations. Two authors (Ruoshuang Han and Yuxin Zhang) independently assessed the risk of bias as described in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions [23]. If more than 10 studies were included, a funnel plot analysis would be employed to assess the reporting biases [24].

Results

The agreement between two reviewers for study selection was 0.85 and for quality assessment of trials was 0.86.

Search results

The flow and the results of study selection are reported in **Figure 1**. After exclusions, made according to the study protocol, 14 RCTs included for further analysis and discussion.

Study characteristics

The characteristics and results of the included studies are shown in **Table 1**. All included trials were double-blind RCTs, trial durations ranged from 2 to 104 weeks (median 33 weeks). Most trials had longer-term extension periods (not completed/reported in all cases). At the end of selection, 14 RCTs assessing canagliflozin (8015 participants, trial duration ranging 2-104 weeks, daily dose ranging 50-300 mg) were included [2, 5, 6, 25-35]. The mean initial HbA1c across the study population of 11 RCTs ranges from 4.3% to 16.3%, and background anti-diabetic treatments consist of metformin monotherapy in four RCTs [25, 29, 32, 33], metformin plus another agent in five RCTs [6, 28, 30, 31, 36] (including metformin alone or metformin plus sulfonylurea in one RCT), diet and exercise [5, 26] in two RCTs, AHA therapies at baseline [34] in one RCT, unclear anti-diabetic drugs [2] in one RCT and unknown treatment [27] in one RCT.

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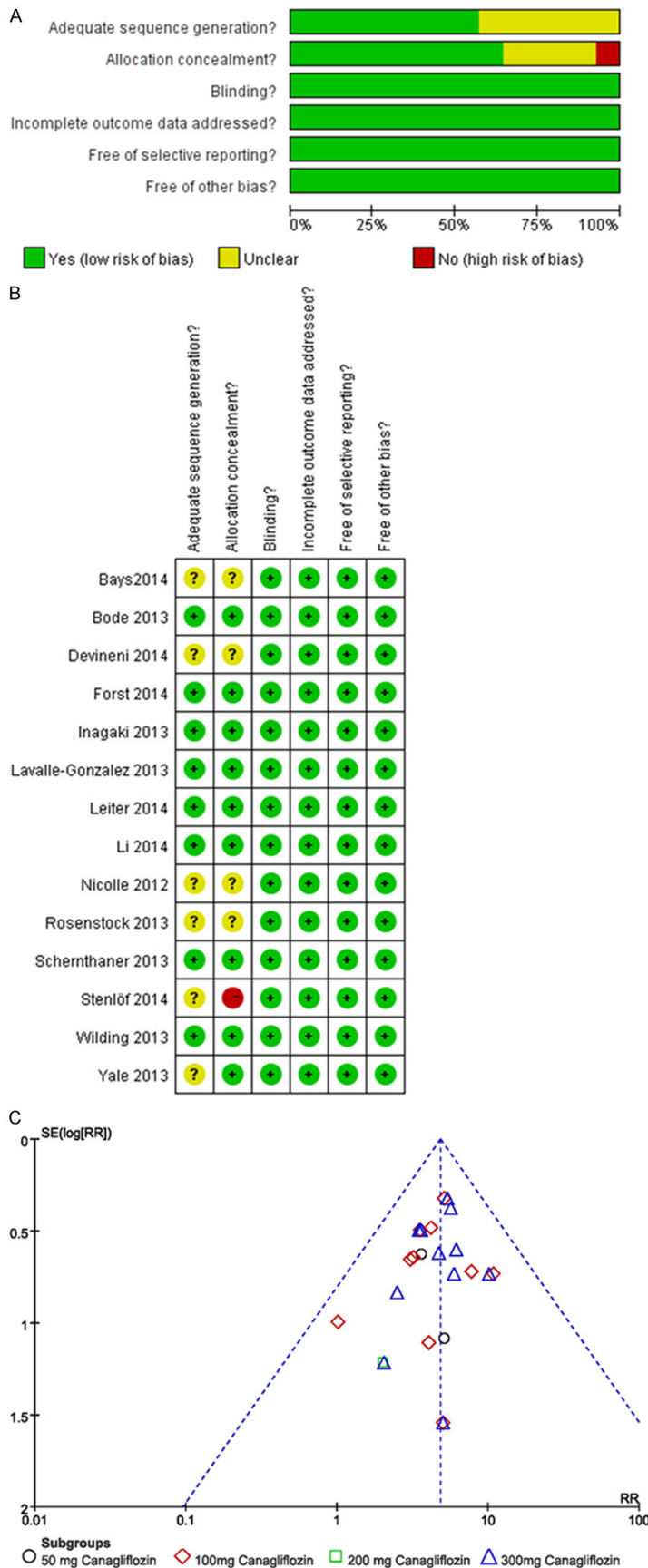


Figure 2. Cochrane risk of bias of included studies. A: Graph; B: Summary; C: Funnel plot.

Quality of included studies and grading of evidence

Overall quality grading is demonstrated in **Table 2**. Quality of evidence was downgraded due to unconformity and publication bias. Generally speaking, the evidence of 5 outcomes was graded to be high, 7 outcomes were graded to be moderate and 2 outcomes were graded to be low.

Cochrane risk of bias

Risk of bias are demonstrated in **Figure 2A, 2B**. The reporting quality was rated as 'high' in 8 of the studies, 'medium' in 5 studies and 'low' in 1 study. The funnel plot did not detect a significant publication bias (**Figure 2C**).

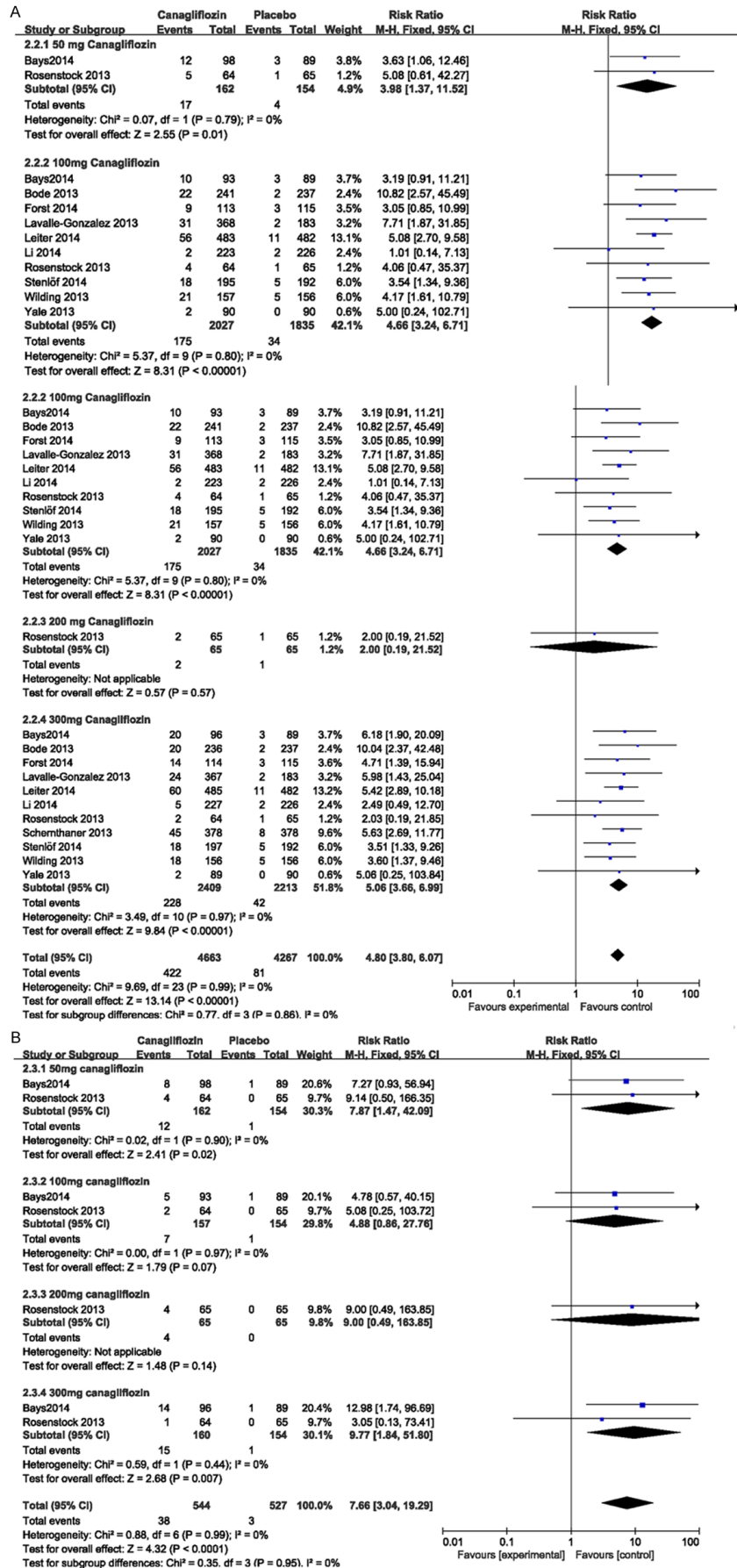
Genital infections and urinary tract infection

Generally, canagliflozin treatment was associated with an extremely increased risk of genital infections (RR 4.80; 95% CI (3.80-6.07); $P < 0.00001$; $I^2 = 0\%$) (**Figure 3A**). In particular, canagliflozin treatment was strongly correlated with a higher risk of vulvovaginal mycotic infection (RR=7.66, 95% CI (3.04, 19.29), $P < 0.001$; $I^2 = 0\%$) (**Figure 3B**). However, canagliflozin did not increase rate of urinary tract infections (UTIs) (RR 1.11; 95% CI (0.94-1.29); $P = 0.21$; $I^2 = 0\%$) (**Figure 3C**).

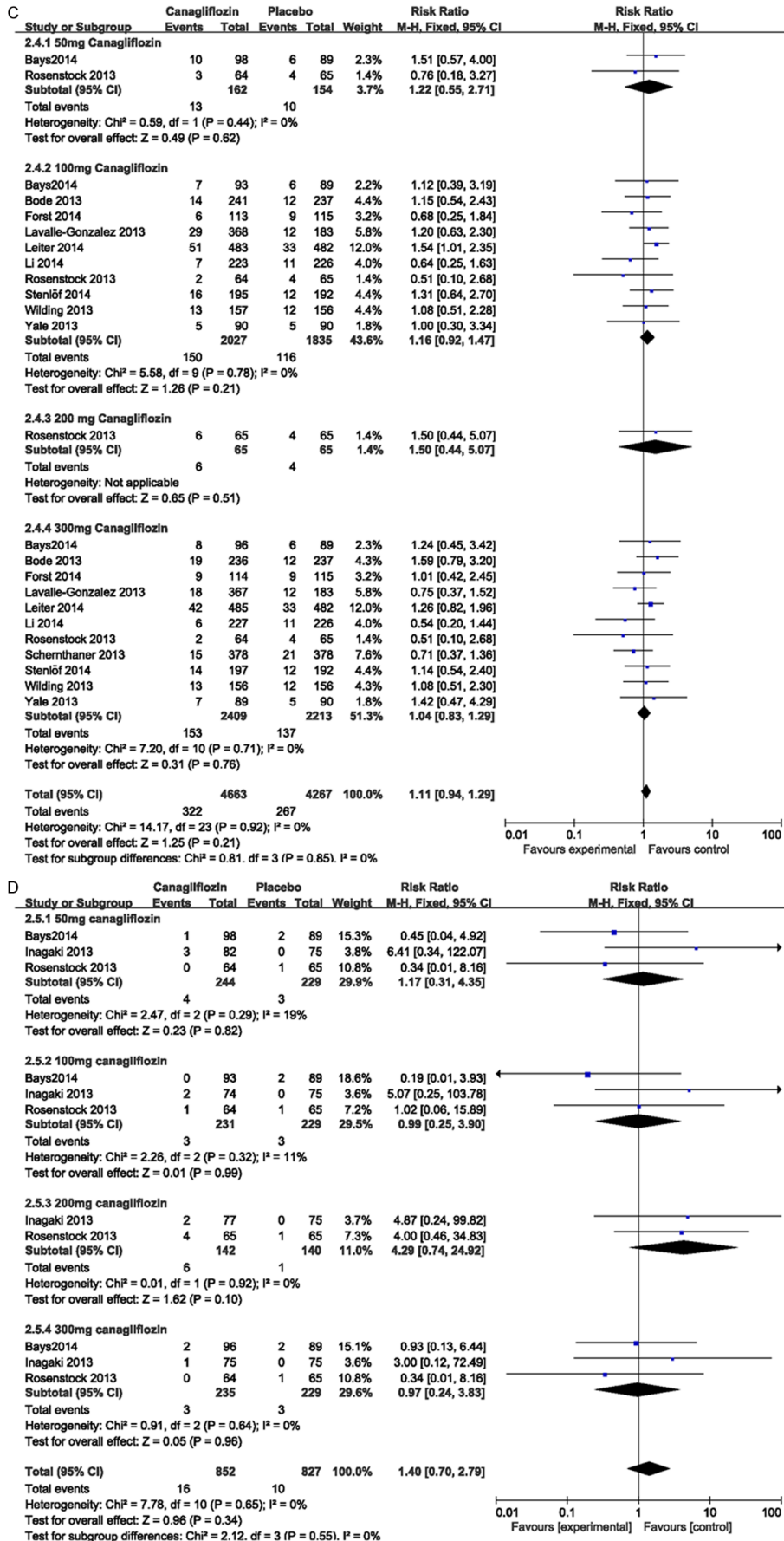
Hypoglycaemia

Incidences of hypoglycaemia and severe hypoglycaemia were both low in all clinical trials. Canagliflozin slightly increase the risk of hypoglycaemia (RR 1.40; 95% CI (0.70-2.79); $P = 0.34$; $I^2 = 0\%$)

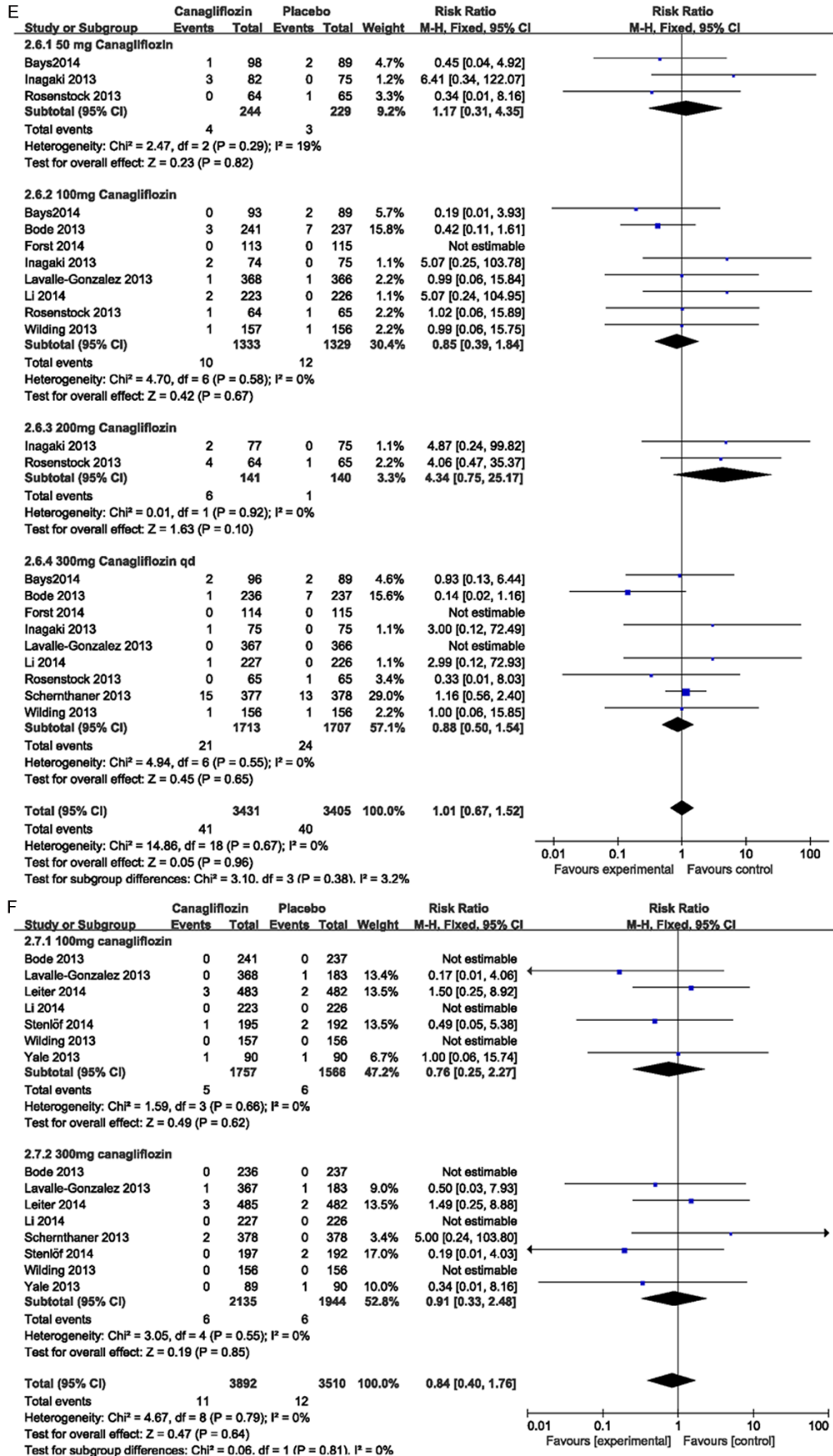
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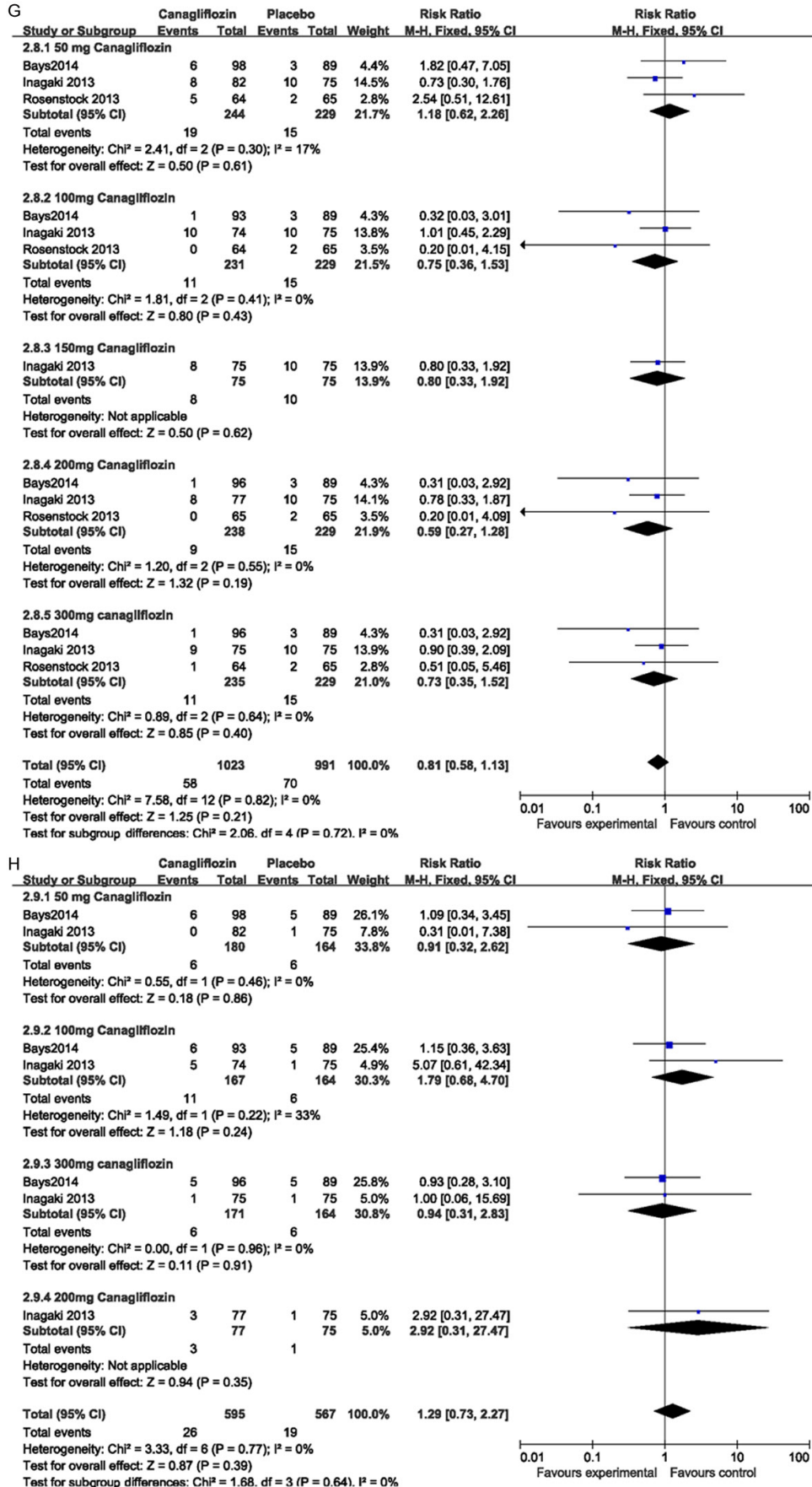
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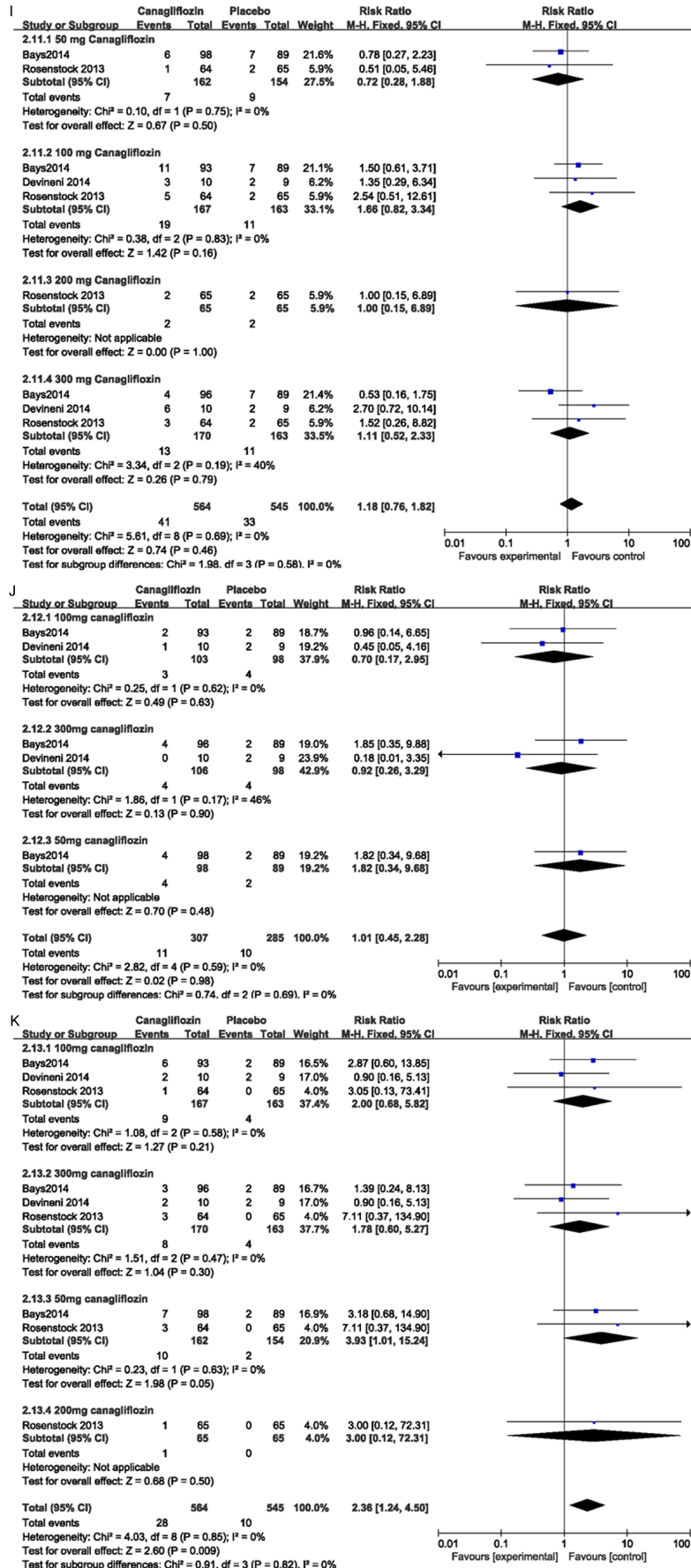
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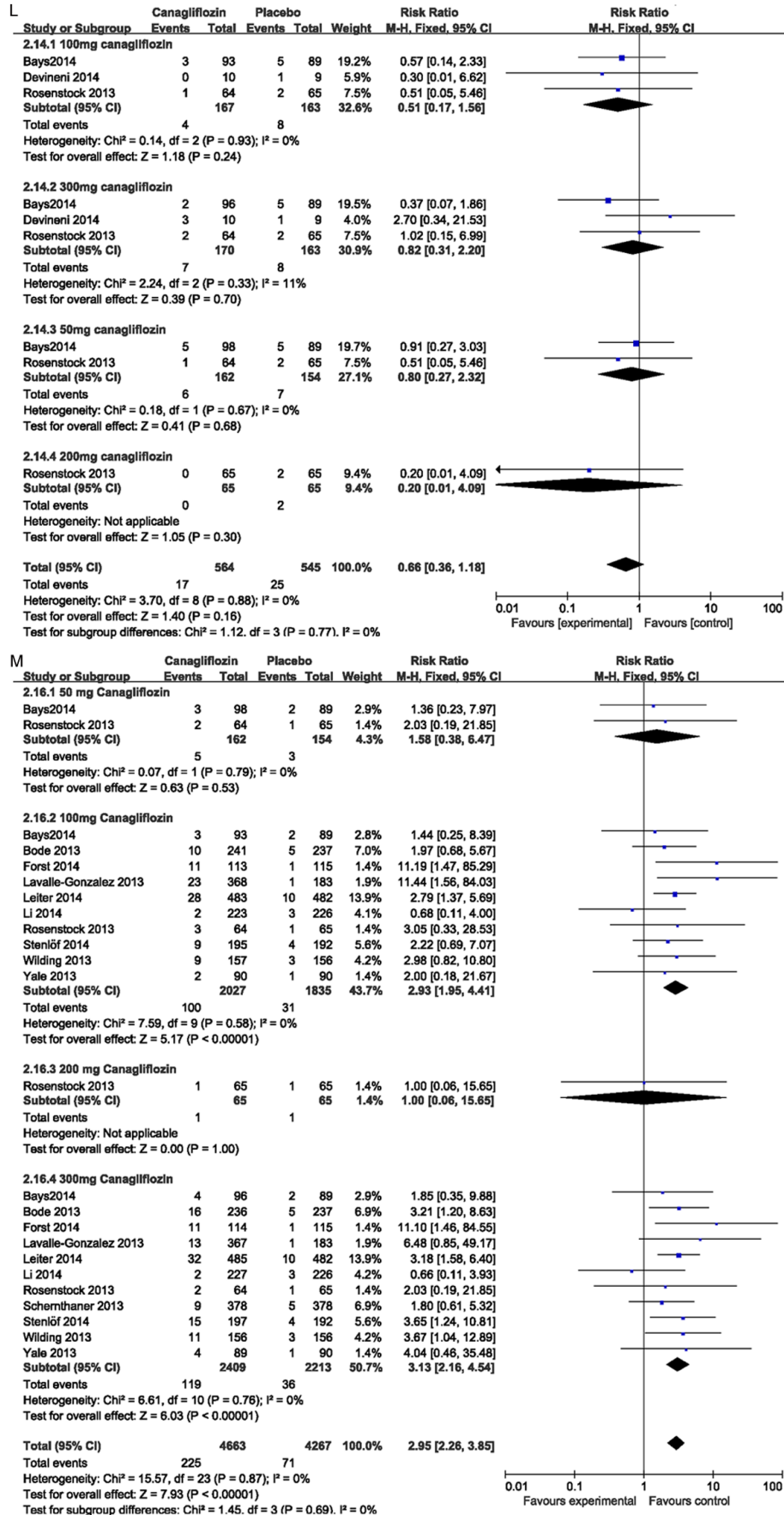
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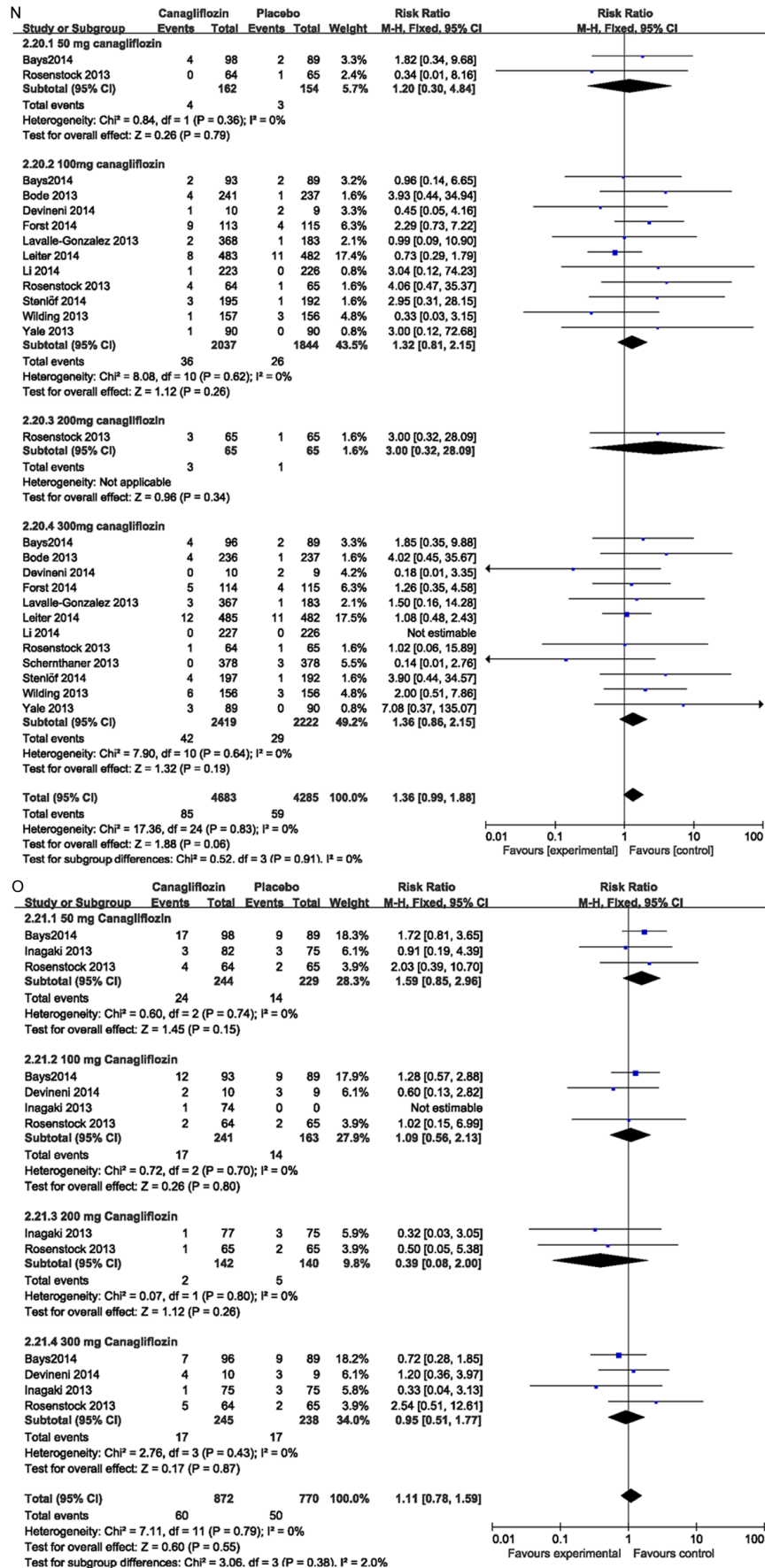
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Safety assessment of canagliflozin for T2DM

Figure 3. Safety profile of canagliflozin compared with active agents or placebo in forest plot. A: Genital infection; B: Vulvovaginal mycotic infection; C: Urinary tract infection; D: Hypoglycaemia; E: Severe hypoglycaemia; F: Death; G: Nasopharyngitis; H: Upper respiratory inflammation; I: Headache; J: Dizziness; K: Nausea; L: Diarrhea; M: Osmotic diuresis related AEs; N: Volume depletion related AEs; O: GI related AEs.

(**Figure 3D**), but it did not increase the risk of severe hypoglycaemia (RR=1.01; 95% CI (0.67-1.52); $P=0.96$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3E**).

Death

A total of 8 RCTs ($n=7402$) reported 23 deaths. Canagliflozin was associated with a lower death rate (RR 0.84; 95% CI (0.40-1.76); $P=0.64$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3F**).

Nasopharyngitis and upper respiratory inflammation

Canagliflozin was revealed to have a relatively lower risk of nasopharyngitis (RR 0.81; 95% CI (0.58-1.13); $P=0.21$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3G**). However, canagliflozin was associated with a slightly higher risk of upper respiratory inflammation (RR 1.29; 95% CI (0.73-2.27); $P=0.39$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3H**).

Headache and dizziness

Canagliflozin did not increase the risk of headache (RR 1.18; 95% CI (0.76-1.82); $P=0.46$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3I**), or the incidence of dizziness (RR 1.01; 95% CI (0.45-2.28); $P=0.98$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3J**).

Nausea and diarrhea

A total of 38 patients were identified with nausea among 3 RCTs ($n=1109$). Canagliflozin was associated with a higher risk of nausea (RR 2.36; 95% CI (1.24-4.50); $P=0.009$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3K**). However, canagliflozin was associated with a slightly lower incidence of diarrhea (RR 0.66; 95% CI (0.36-1.18); $P=0.16$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3L**).

Other adverse events

Canagliflozin was revealed to have a strongly higher risk of osmotic diuresis related AEs (RR 2.95; 95% CI (2.26-3.85); $P<0.00001$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3M**), and it slightly increase the risk of volume depletion related AEs (RR 1.36; 95% CI (0.99-1.88); $P=0.06$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3N**). However, canagliflozin did not increase the risks of GI related AEs (RR 1.11; 95% CI (0.78-1.59);

$P=0.55$; $I^2=0\%$) (**Figure 3O**). In addition, Bays et al. [26] also reported 9 cases of sinusitis in canagliflozin group, 10 cases of constipation in canagliflozin group and 6 cases in control group. Rosenstock et al. [25] reported 8 cases of pollakiuria in canagliflozin group and 4 in control group.

Discussion

This systematic review provided the most up-to-date summary considering the safety of canagliflozin as of February 2015. In this meta-analysis, we compared canagliflozin with placebo or other AHAs from safety aspect. The results demonstrated that canagliflozin significantly increase the risk of genital infections, osmotic diuresis related AEs, vulvovaginal mycotic infection and nausea. Canagliflozin was also associated with a slightly increased risk of volume depletion related AEs, upper respiratory inflammation, and hypoglycaemia, but it didn't increase the risk of severe hypoglycemia, UTI, GI related AEs or dizziness.

The meta-analysis showed that canagliflozin act well as an add-on drug to previous conventional AHAs in terms of safety. Previous RCTs demonstrated that a more severe situation of insulin resistance and other complications was made by many AHAs in T2DM patients [8]. For instance, sulphonylureas, glitazones and insulin lead to weight gain, sulphonylureas and insulin lead to hypoglycaemia and pioglitazone can lead to edema, heart failure and fractures [16]. In our study, canagliflozin showed well tolerance among T2DM patients and most of the AEs mentioned above were hardly significant during the treatment.

The optimum dose of canagliflozin for T2DM treatment remains controversial. In most of included RCTs, 100 and 300 mg canagliflozin were adopted. Previous evidences suggested the preferred dose of canagliflozin was 100 mg per day since AEs appeared to be moderate, and higher dosage would not lead to improvement in efficiency [15]. From economy aspect, canagliflozin appears to be less competitive compared with sulphonylureas [16].

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However, canagliflozin could be the first choice for those T2DM patients who are insufficiently controlled or having problems tolerating conventional drugs like metformin and sulphonylureas.

AEs were evaluated in all RCTs included in this meta-analysis. Overall, canagliflozin was well tolerated in most of the trials. Most of the AEs were mild and transient. Some AEs like genital infection and osmotic diuresis were significantly enhanced in canagliflozin groups compared with control. The incidences of some serious AEs like death were slightly lower across placebo and control agents.

UTIs

It is obvious that glucosuria caused by treatment of canagliflozin is likely to induce UTI since glucose is the culture medium of bacteria. Some trails did show the increase risk of UTI, while in our study the incidence of UTI didn't increase with canagliflozin treatment compared with control. UTIs were very common in canagliflozin but usually moderate and responded well to normal therapy. The mechanisms remain controversial. It may be attributed to the increased glycosuria which may predispose to bacteria [15]. Since the results showed that canagliflozin was related to a higher risk of UTIs, T2DM patients treating with canagliflozin should be noted to report clinical signs and symptoms of UTIs to their physicians in time. A monitor for UTIs is appropriate to prevent further renal infections. Future RCTs are expected to evaluate the safety of canagliflozin among patients with renal dysfunction

Genetic mycotic infection

Genetic mycotic infections showed strong correlations with canagliflozin in our study. Fortunately, the infections are usually not serious and are easy to treat. Nevertheless, both patients and doctors should pay close attention to it. The increased genetic mycotic infection could be related to the increase in urinary glucose excretion by canagliflozin. Infection recurrent frequently and patients with history of genital mycotic infections are more prone to develop this type of infection [37]. Canagliflozin was revealed to increase the incidence of renal-related AEs in subjects with moderate renal impairment more easily compared with control.

In that case, patients with mild to moderate renal insufficiency should monitor kidney function and adjust the dosage more carefully.

Osmotic diuresis

Osmotic diuresis is another AE that strongly correlated with canagliflozin treatment. Indeed, the osmotic diuresis we discussed is distinct from classical osmotic diuresis for the loss of sodium, which may be attributed to the co-transport with glucose by SGLT2 [9]. Osmotic diuresis along with volume depletion may contribute to the decrease in blood pressure, hypotension, postural dizziness, which may attribute to improvement of T2DM.

Hypoglycemia

Given the mechanism of SGLT2 receptor inhibitors, the risk and severity of hypoglycaemia would be expected to be low. The majority of glucose reabsorption is managed by the early proximal renal tubule in kidney, where SGLT2 is mainly expressed [38, 39]. The threshold for hypoglycemia (RTG) is 72 mg/dL, and the RTG is among 80 to 90 mg/dL with canagliflozin treatment [36], which is not low enough to cause severe hypoglycemia. The background treatment like metformin is presented as the high risk factors to hypoglycemia incidence [40]. Similarly, one previous study carried out by Nauck et al. [41] found that the incident of hypoglycaemia is notably higher in the sulphonylurea group than that in canagliflozin group. The presented meta-analysis also concluded that canagliflozin did not increase the incidence of severe hypoglycemia. Moreover, the ADA guidelines emphasized the necessity to add SGLT2 inhibitor in the treatment of T2DM in order to prevent hypoglycemia while reduce the dose of other AHAs (including insulin) at the same time [2].

Other AEs

Other side effects include: dizziness, headache, upper respiratory inflammation, nausea, GI related AEs, death, nasopharyngitis and diarrhea. Interestingly, canagliflozin was associated with a lower risk of diarrhea, death or nasopharyngitis. Several rare AEs that were reported in a single research like increased blood ketone bodies, hypoglycaemia unawareness, gastrointestinal disorders, malaise and pollakiuria were not included in meta-analysis.

Safety assessment of canagliflozin for T2DM

Totally 3 systemic reviews [14-16] had assessed the efficacy and safety of the SGLT2 inhibitors (including canagliflozin) in the treatment of T2DM. To compare, our review had several differences and stimulating points. First, only one RCT of canagliflozin was enrolled in Clar [16] and Musso's [15] research, while we included 13 RCTs that solely focus on canagliflozin; Second, they assessed both efficiency and safety while our meta-analysis was dedicated to safety assessment, which would be more specific. In our study, 14 RCTs were included and were divided into 4 subgroups based on the dosage of canagliflozin. 100 mg and 300 mg dosage groups were adopted in most RCTs, whereas the 50 mg and 200 mg groups were only included in 3 RCTs [2, 25, 26], and 1209 patients were enrolled to that arm. Actually, no significant differences were detected between subgroups with different doses. In order to keep the constancy of the meta-analysis, we adopted the overall effects of each particular AE, regardless of its subgroups. Plus, statistics in this meta-analysis showed that the SGLT2 receptor inhibitors might be especially useful in patients with longer duration. The capacity of β cell was diminished under long-term treatment of other agents like sulphonylureas.

There were no strict limitations of the application of canagliflozin. These findings may help physicians make advisable decision for the treatment of T2DM. However, some limitations should be noted in this meta-analysis: 1) The limited number of existing RCTs may increase the risk of overestimating the R^2 in meta-regression. 2) For each AE, we used the whole effects of ranged dose of canagliflozin to keep consistency of the study. However, if significant differences appeared between subgroups, they were discussed separately. 3) Five of the included RCTs were sponsored by institutions or corporations, which might introduce some potential bias, due to a concern that industry funding was strongly associated with favorable outcomes. We will update our meta-analysis with further RCTs that have proper registration and less potential biases. 4) There were some additional issues that should be noted in post-marketing surveillance including relationships with cardiovascular events and weight loss, decrease in blood pressure and safety of the appliance in children and pregnancy with T2DM.

Generally, our meta-analysis focused on the overall safety of canagliflozin, disregarding the duration and sample capacity. However, before clinical practicing, evaluation for long-term safety of canagliflozin is needed, which requires RCTs with adequate power and duration. In conclusion, canagliflozin was a relatively safe T2DM drug both for monotherapy and add-on treatment assessed from existing researches, but the increased risk of genital infection, osmotic diuresis related AEs and nausea should not be neglected.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

None.

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