Prevalence of Irritable Bowel Syndrome in the Greek General Population

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Background: The prevalence of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) has been reported to range between 12-20% in European countries, but no data are available for Greece. We performed a community survey in order to document prevalence, demographics, clinical characteristics and management of IBS in the Greek population. Methods: The survey was performed utilizing well established marketing research techniques. In the first stage, prevalence of IBS, as defined by the Rome III criteria, in the general community was collected. In the second stage, personal interviews were done with subjects suffering from IBS to further understand the natural history, profile of complaints, actual mode of presentation of individual episodes, role of the physician and the role of medication in dealing with symptoms. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and logistic regression. Logistic regression was carried out on the dataset and Odds Ratios (OR) and their 95% confidence interval (CI) were calculated where appropriate. Results: The study sample consisted of 1800 participants (31% females), 15-64 years old, living in large and small urban centers. Symptoms of IBS were reported by 35% of participants. Women suffered more frequently than men (19% versus 8%, OR:2.70, 95%CI: 1.96-2.62, p<0.0001), as well as participants over 45 compared to those 18-44 years old (19% versus 11%, OR:1.90, 95%CI: 1.42-2.62, p=0.0001). The main symptom reported was abdominal cramping and pain (100%) and this was accompanied by bloating and/or fullness (70%). Diarrhea and constipation was reported by 50% and 35% respectively. IBS symptoms were an issue of primary importance. Medical advice was asked by 40% of sufferers. Females and sufferers aged 35-44 years old, as well as those aged 54-64 years old were more likely to seek medical advice for their symptoms. The main reason for seeking medical advice was concern about persistent and recurring pain symptoms. Medical advice was asked by 19% of patients over 65 years old, respectively. IBS symptoms were an issue of primary importance. Medical advice was asked by 40% of sufferers. Females and sufferers aged 35-44 years old, as well as those aged 54-64 years old were more likely to seek medical advice for their symptoms. The main reason for seeking medical advice was concern about persistent and recurring pain symptoms.