

Sociological characteristics of MS patients

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Multiple sclerosis (MS) affects different parts of life such as married state, child bearing, education, employment and retirement.

We interviewed 106 MS patients, 32 male and 74 female and analyzed married state, child number before and after diagnosis, level of education, employment, duration of employment and retirement.

We found out that 24 (75%) male are married and 8 (25%) are not married, 51 (68.9%) female are married, 9 (12.2%) are not married, 9 (12.2%) are divorced and 5 (6.7%) are widows.

11 (34.4%) male have not children, 9 (28.1%) have 1 child, 8 (25.0%) have 2 children and 4 (12.5%) have more than 2 children. 14 (18.9%) female have not children, 18 (24.3%) have 1 child, 28 (37.8%) have 2 children and 14 (18.9%) have more than 2 children. 17 (80.9%) male and 50 (83.3%) female have children before the diagnosis is established.

21 (65.6%) male finished high school, 5 (15.6%) are college-trained and 6 (18.7%) are without education. 44 (59.4%) female finished secondary school, 6 (8.1%) are college-trained and 24 (32.4%) are without education.

8 (25.0%) male are still working, while 24 (75.0%) are retired. 30 (40.5%) female are still working, while 44 (59.5%) are retired. In the male group MS was the main cause of retirement, while in the female group in 32 (72.7%).

The results show that MS mainly affects child bearing in both groups, meaning that only 19.1% male and 16.7% female have children after the disease onset. MS shortens working age and causes early retirement especially in male group.

Obesity and stroke in young adults

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Introduction: Obesity has been recognized as an isolated risk factor for stroke. Also in obese patients more frequently other risk factors for stroke as hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, ischemic heart disease and obstructive sleep apnea are present. The aim of our study is to investigate the presence of obesity among other risk factors for stroke in younger adult patients with ischemic stroke.

Methods: This was a pilot study performed on patients with ischemic stroke younger than 55 years of age. We included 50 patients. All patients underwent standard diagnostic procedure, and in all the height, weight and waist and hip circumference were measured.

Results: The study included 23 female and 27 male patients. The mean age of patients was 39.8 ± 10.5 years for male group and 41.6 ± 7.7 years for the female group. Comparing to control group with average abdominal girth of 94.9 ± 5.8 cm, in male young stroke patients abdominal obesity was present, with average abdominal girth of 102.6 ± 9.8 cm. No significant difference was present in female group, neither for body mass nor for abdominal obesity measures.

Conclusions: In younger adults obesity is important risk factor for stroke, even without other standard risk factor for atherosclerosis and stroke. This is especially prominent for abdominal obesity among male patients.

Public knowledge and predictors for negative attitudes toward patients with epilepsy in Croatia

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Rationale: We assessed public knowledge of and attitudes toward people with epilepsy in the Croatian population. We also aimed to identify independent predictors of negative attitudes.

Methods: We performed a survey consisting of a representative sample of 1500 adults. The population tested were 18 years or older, living in a private households. Croatia is a country of 5.5 million inhabitants with a socioeconomic and ethnic profile similar to neighboring Middle European countries. Within the sample, the respondents were selected according to the random route method that guaranteed a representative sample concerning households. The survey consisted of questions intended to determine the respondents' socioeconomic background and education, acquaintance with persons with epilepsy and knowledge and attitudes towards them. Urban and rural population was tested living in the places of less than 2,000 to more than 100,000 inhabitants. This survey consisted of 14 questions, tailored to the ones used in earlier studies of public knowledge towards people with epilepsy in other countries. Logistic regression analysis was used to test for independent predictors of negative attitudes. All data were stored and analyzed in the SPSS database.

Results: We surveyed a representative sample of Croatian population aged between 18–94 years. Majority were females (55.3%), living in urban setting (61.3%) with high school or higher degree (78.6%). Majority of the respondents worked for a public or private company (37.5%), and 34% were retired.

The results show that 91% of respondents have heard about epilepsy, 57% of them know a person with epilepsy and 55% have witnessed a seizure. 48% believed that people with epilepsy are treated differently in the society. Majority of them presume that epilepsy is a mental illness (41%), 29% that people with epilepsy should have a lower quality job, 17% do not want that their son/daughter live with person with epilepsy, 17% think that people with epilepsy should not have children, and 12% that they should attend special schools. 87% of respondents without any regular education assume that people with epilepsy should have a lower quality job, however, this is still high belief in the people having a university degree (25%). Consistent independent predictors for all attitudes were a positive response to the question whether one has heard or read about epilepsy, the misconception of epilepsy as a form of mental illness and an infectious disorder. Employment and knowing someone with epilepsy were independent predictors for four out of five tested attitudes.

Conclusion: This is the first study assessing public knowledge of and attitudes toward people with epilepsy in the Croatian population. We showed that public knowledge of epilepsy is similar to other countries, and we defined predictors for negative attitudes. Future educational campaigns on epilepsy should improve attitudes toward epilepsy mainly by targeting misconceptions about epilepsy and by offering opportunities for personal acquaintance with people with epilepsy.