

PITUITARY GLAND

Prevalence of pituitary adenomas in a geographically well-defined population

Epidemiological data on pituitary adenomas could help optimize allocation of resources for the provision of care and services for patients with these intracranial neoplasms. A cross-sectional study of a well-defined population in Banbury (Oxfordshire, UK) has now revealed a fourfold increased prevalence of pituitary adenomas compared with previous findings.

“Epidemiological data on pituitary adenomas could help optimize allocation of resources...”

Despite advances in diagnostic technologies, which have contributed to an increase in the number of pituitary adenomas detected, information on the prevalence of these tumors was insufficient. Researchers at the Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology

and Metabolism approached 14 general practitioner surgeries located in urban and surrounding rural areas of northern Oxfordshire to amass data on cases of pituitary adenomas in a total of 81,449 inhabitants. “Banbury is a finite area with a large number of surgeries and population movement is minimal,” explains author John Wass.

The community-based study identified 63 cases of pituitary adenomas—a prevalence of 77.6 cases per 100,000 inhabitants—through a computer database search. Of these neoplasms, 57% were prolactinomas, 28% constituted nonfunctioning pituitary adenomas and 2% were corticotroph adenomas; acromegaly was diagnosed in 11% of all cases, whereas the functional status of 2% of pituitary adenomas was unknown. In the >60 year age group, the diagnosis of nonfunctioning pituitary adenomas was predominant. Prolactinoma, a tumor that was detected in 76% of females with pituitary adenomas, was

the most frequent pituitary adenoma diagnosed in patients ≤60 years old. Notably, the median age of patients with pituitary adenomas was just 37 years. As these tumors affect mainly young, economically active individuals, early diagnosis could prevent loss of productivity.

“Doctors looking after patients will have an increased awareness of these problems and hopefully higher resources will be given to patients with pituitary disease by health carers and the National Health Service in the UK,” concludes Wass, who plans to analyze the same cohort further for “different endocrine conditions including Addison’s disease and traumatic brain injury”.

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Original article Fernandez, A. *et al.* Prevalence of pituitary adenomas: a community-based, cross-sectional study in Banbury (Oxfordshire, UK). *Clin. Endocrinol.* doi:10.1111/j.1365-2265.2009.03667