EuroSciCon

9th Edition of International Conference on

Preventive Medicine & Public Health

July 16-17, 2018
London, UK

J Prev Med 2018, Volume 3
DOI: 10.21767/2572-5483-C1-003

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF SICKLE CELL DISEASE-IRAQ, 2015

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Background: Sickle cell disease (SCD) is an autosomal recessive disorder characterized by production of abnormal hemoglobin. It is particularly common among people whose ancestors come from certain areas in the world including Arabian Peninsula and Mediterranean countries. In the United States, there are 72,000 SCD patients and two million carriers. In Iraq there is limited data on epidemiology and burden of SCD. The objectives of this study were to estimate the incidence and prevalence and identify their trends over the period 2010-2015, and describe basic epidemiological characteristics of SCD patients in Iraq.

Methods: We conducted this descriptive study through visiting the accessible 16 (of the 19) hemoglobinopathies centers in Iraq. A desk review of the records of all patients registered in these centers during 2010-2015. We obtained population data of Iraqi governorates from the Ministry of Planning.

Results: The total number of SCD patients in Iraq in 2015, was 5,124. The prevalence of SCD had slightly increased from 13.1/100,000 in 2010 to 13.9/100,000 in 2015, while the incidence had decreased from 19.7/100,000 in 2010 to 13.2/100,000 in 2015. The highest prevalence of SCD was registered in Basra province (the most southern province) (124/100,000) and the lowest was in Sulaymaniyah and Salahaldin (0.3/100,000). Male: female ratio was 1.1:1. The mean age of SCD patients was 16.3±12.4. Most of the patients were in the age group 6–15 years (37%) and only 16% aged ≥30 years. Around 67% of patients were of consanguineous parents. The current prevalence of hepatitis C infection was 6.4% and for hepatitis B infection was 0.2% and none of the patients had human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Conclusion: In spite of decreasing incidence of SCD, more work is needed to increase public awareness against consanguineous marriage. Further studies are needed to explore factors behind the variability in the prevalence between different governorates.

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