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EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THALASSEMIA-IRAQ, 2015

Kamal A Kadhim, Kadhim H Baldawi and Faris Lami

University of Baghdad, Iraq

Background: Globally, thalassemia is the most common hereditary hemoglobinopathy, affecting equally males and females and occurred in 4.4/10,000 live births. In the developing world, the majority of patients die before the age of 20 years. In Iraq, there is a little data on epidemiology and burden of thalassemia. The objectives of this study were to identify the epidemiological characteristics of thalassemia patients in Iraq, estimate its incidence, prevalence, and identify their trends during 2010-2015.

Methods: A retrospective review of all patients' records for 2010-2015 that retrieved through visiting the accessible 16 (of the 19) thalassemia centers in Iraq. Corresponding population data of Iraq provinces obtained from Ministry of Planning. We calculated annual incidence and prevalence for all provinces.

Results: Thalassemia represented 75% of all hemoglobinopathies in Iraq in 2015, with a prevalence of 36/100,000 population, and incidence of 34/100,000 livebirths. The prevalence of thalassemia increased from 32/100,000

population in 2010 to 36/100,000 population in 2015, while the incidence decreased from 63/100,000 livebirths in 2010 to 34/100,000 livebirths in 2015. β -thalassemia major represented 67% of all types of thalassemia. The highest prevalence of thalassemia was registered in Basra province (74/100,000 population). Male, female ratio was 1.1:1. Most of the patients were in the age group 6–15 years (42%) and only 9.5% aged ≥ 30 years. Around 75% of patients were of consanguineous parents. Among 10,740 patients aged 6+ years (school age), 13% (1,401) did not attend schools. About 28% (3705) of all patients aged >18years; 18% (648) of them were married, 8% (310) attended college, and 17% (628) were employed.

Conclusion: In spite of the decreasing incidence, hundreds of new children with thalassemia are born every year. Health education, carrier screening and premarital screening remain the best preventive measures that can enhance health, social and economic benefits.

kamalabdrazaq@yahoo.com