Prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome in the Adult Population of Yecla (Murcia). Degree of Agreement Between Three Definitions of It

Juan Martínez Candela, Josep Franch Nadal, Josefa Romero Ortiz, Carmen Cánovas Domínguez, Aristides Gallardo Martín and Miguel Páez Pérez

Objectives. To determine the prevalence of metabolic syndrome (MS), its components and insulin resistance (IR) in the adult population of Yecla. To study the variability between 3 definitions of the syndrome and IR. To identify the variables that predict the presence of IR and to verify the diagnostic validity of several strategies for predicting it.

Design. Descriptive, cross-sectional study.

Setting. Primary care, Yecla (Murcia), Spain.

Participants. We studied 317 persons (292 with analysis) out of 424 selected by stratified (age and sex) random sampling from 18,059 people ≥30 years old and possessing a health card.

Main measurements. We used WHO-99, NCEP III, and EGIR criteria for diagnosing MS, and WHO-99 for defining DM2, impaired basal glucose and impaired glucose tolerance. The following variables were collected: social, demographic and personal details, plasma lipid, glycosylated haemoglobin, microalbuminuria, and insulin levels. IR was defined by the HOMA method at ≥3.8 or as the highest quartile of basal insulinemia in normoglycaemic persons.

Results. MS prevalence was NCEP 20.2% (95% CI, 19.1-21.3), WHO 35.3% (95% CI, 34.6-36.1), EGIR 34% (95% CI, 32.4-35.6), and IR was 27.7% (95% CI, 22.6-32.8). The sensitivity and specificity of NCEP, WHO, and EGIR criteria for detecting IR were (46% and 90%), (78% and 81%), and (73% and 95%), respectively. Insulin resistance was associated significantly with age, basal glycemia, triglycerides, and waist circumference.

Conclusions. Metabolic syndrome is common in Yecla (more so in men). There is disagreement between several diagnostic criteria for the syndrome, with NCEP criteria less sensitive in determining IR. A generally accepted definition is needed.

Keywords. Metabolic syndrome. Prevalence. Definitions.
Introduction

In 1988, Reaven defined an entity called “syndrome X,” characterised by the coexistence of different cardiovascular risk factors in the same person, such as obesity, glucose tolerance disturbances, dyslipidaemia, and high blood pressure. In 1991 the strong relationship was described between these clinical disorders and resistance to the action of insulin (IR), which constitutes the physiopathological substrate of metabolic syndrome (MS), as it is now called. Despite this long history, there is still no uniformity in the diagnostic criteria of MS, since 3 large organisations (OMS, NCEP/ATPIII, and EGIR) have defined it with their own criteria which, although having the same philosophy, are at variance with the cut off points used for the diagnosis and clinical interpretation.

Epidemiological studies are beginning to appear which give variable data on the prevalence of MS, particularly depending on the origin of the population and the diagnostic method used. Thus, the prevalence can vary from 1.3% recorded in France to 33.4% recorded in Turkey, both by using NCEP criteria. It should be pointed out that, in Spain, the recent data provided by DESIRE study, with a prevalence which varies depending on which criteria is used, WHO (42.1%), EGIR (26.4%) or NCEP (22.6%). The results of the study in the Canary Islands also has to be mentioned, with a figure of 24.4% (according to NCEP).

But the real importance of diagnosing MS lies in the coexistence of different cardiovascular risk factors (CVRF), such as obesity, high blood pressure (HBP), lipid disorders or diabetes mellitus, and the fact that the presence of an MS per se brings about a higher morbidity-mortality and practically doubles the cardiovascular morbidity-mortality in the general population. For all these reasons, the principal objective of our study is to detect the prevalence of metabolic syndrome in an area of Health Region in Murcia.

Subjects and Methods

Design

Cross-sectional, descriptive population study carried out on adults over 30 years old, cared for in 2 Yecla Health Centres, (902 men and 9158 women with individual health cards) with a total urban population of 32 468 inhabitants during the year 2001.

Study Population

Using the Murcia Primary Care Management health card database, a sample of 425 individuals were selected for the study of carbohydrate metabolism, using simple randomisation, group by gender and four age intervals (30-42, 43-54, 55-65, and >65 years). The sample size was considered for a prevalence of glucose intolerance of 10% and a precision of 3%. The following exclusion criteria were established: gestation or puerperium, not of Spanish nationality, on continuous treatment (more than 6 months) with glucose lowering drugs (corticoids and/or thiazides in high doses), serious cardiovascular or systemic diseases (physically or psychologically handicapped to be able to participate in the study), death or population change.

The individuals who had any of the exclusion criteria were replaced by others, again selected randomly and classified by gender and age. Finally, the prevalence of metabolic syndrome was calculated in the 292 subjects who had supporting analytical data.
Measurements

A double visit was carried out to collect the data, as shown in the general scheme of the study:

The variables were:

1. Sociodemographic: age, gender, personal history (HBP, lipid disorders, diabetes, and normal), family history of diabetes, smoking habits (\textit{‘smoker’:} more than 1 cigarette/day, and \textit{‘non-smoker’} no cigarettes).

2. Anthropometric and physical examination: body mass index (BMI), waist circumference (WC) and waist-hips index (WHI) according to that recommended by the Spanish Society for the Study of Obesity (SEEDO),

3. Analytical: fasting plasma glucose and after an oral glucose load of 75 g (G2h) (hexokinase method, Hitachi 917 auto-analysers Roche Diagnostic\textregistered{} with which the other biologic determinations were carried out). Also quantified were, 24 h urine microalbumin, lipid profile (total cholesterol, high, and low density lipoprotein cholesterol [HDL-C and LDL-C]), and triglycerides, renal profile (urea, creatinine, and uric acid), glyco-sylated haemoglobin (normal range, 3.5\%–5.8\% HPLC method, HA-8110 Menarini Diagnostics\textregistered{} analyser), high sensitivity CRP by the immunoturbidimetric method on the Roche Modular P800 analyser and fasting insulin level.

Data was collected during the months of February to June 2002 by 2 medical residents; the blood samples were taken first thing in the morning in the appropriate health centre by nursing professionals.

The anticipated biases were that of no response and information. To minimise the former, repeated calls were made, and non working days were made available and the final results were adjusted and standardised for age and gender according to the direct method,\textsuperscript{16} taking the Spanish population of July 2002 as a reference. To decrease the information bias, the measurements

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Criteria of the Different Definitions of Metabolic Syndrome\textsuperscript{*}}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Criteria & WHO & NCEP & EGBR \\
\hline
Body mass index (BMI) & ≥30 & & \\
Waist circumference & ≤89 cm (men) or ≤88 cm (women) & ≥102 cm (men) or ≥88 cm (women) & ≥102 cm (men) or ≥88 cm (women) \\
Blood pressure & ≥140/90 mmHg or previous treatment & ≥130/85 mmHg or previous treatment & ≥140/90 mmHg or previous treatment \\
Baseline glucose & ≥110 mg/dL or DM treatment & ≥110 mg/dL or DM treatment & ≥110 mg/dL or DM treatment \\
Insulin resistance & ≥75 insulin normal population & FTG insulin normal population & ≥75 insulin normal population \\
Triglycerides & ≥150 mg/dL & ≥150 mg/dL & ≥150 mg/dL \\
HDL-C & ≤40 mg/dL (men) or ≤50 mg/dL (women) & ≤40 mg/dL (men) or ≤50 mg/dL (women) & ≤40 mg/dL \\
Urine microalbumin & EULe-20 mg/L or albumin/creatinine <30 mg/g & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

*DM indicates diabetes mellitus; HDL-C, high density lipoprotein cholesterol; IGT, impaired glucose tolerance; IFG, impaired fasting glucose.

Metabolic syndrome according to World Health Organization (WHO): requires alteration of carbohydrate metabolism or insulin resistance and the coexistence of 2 or more criteria. Metabolic syndrome of the NCEP (National Cholesterol Education Program): requires the coexistence of 3 or more criteria.

Metabolic syndrome of the (European Group For The Study Of Insulin Resistance): requires the presence of insulin resistance and the coexistence of 2 or more criteria.
were made in the same period and with the same measurement tools for the physical examination; a pilot study with 25 cases was carried out before the study to check the concordance between the two medical residents who carried out the field work.

Statistical Analysis
A descriptive analysis of the variables was performed using frequency distribution tables for qualitative variables. The quantitative ones are summarised as their mean ± standard deviation (SD) and 95% confidence interval (CI). The prevalence rates are given as crude and adjusted to the population were, according to the WHO criteria, 35.3% (95% CI, 29.8–40.8), according to NCEP 20.2% (95% CI, 15.6–24.8) and according to EGIR 24.0% (95% CI, 19.1–28.9). The prevalence of IR (HOMA2c3.8) was 27.7% (95% CI, 22.6–32.8). The distribution by age group and gender and their adjustment to the Spanish population and that of Segi are shown in Table 3. In the diabetic population, 70.8, 89.6, or 43.8% had MS criteria depending on which definition, NCEP, WHO, or EGIR, respectively. The presence or prevalence of the different components of MS in our population, depending on the different diagnostic criteria used and their distribution by gender are shown in Table 4.

As regards the concordance between the different MS and IR diagnostic criteria (Table 5) we can see that the percentage of concordant cases varies between 77.4% and 88.7% depending on the criteria compared. The k value is low (0.39) when we compare the NCEP criteria (the most used in clinical practice) with those of EGIR or HOMA.

The sensitivity, specificity, the positive predictive value (PPV) and the negative predictive value (NPV) of the IR diagnostic criteria for the diagnosis of IR calculated using a HOMA2c3.8, are also shown in Table 5. It was verified that the 3 criteria have a high specificity (around 90%), but with a lower sensitivity (45.7% in the case of the NCEP).

A relationship analysis was carried out on the variables which could predict the presence of one IR (HOMA2c3.8) using multivariate regression models. The waist circumference was analysed using the percentage of concordant cases and the kappa index (κ), which was considered excellent for values >0.75 and only acceptable for values between 0.75 and 0.40. Values of Κ < 0.6 were considered as statistically significant.

The study of the relationship between the variables that could be used to predict the presence of IR (HOMA2c3.8) was performed using multivariate stepwise logistic regression models. The statistical computer software SPSS® (Version 11.0) was used.
Prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome in the Adult Population of Yecla (Murcia): Degree of Agreement Between Three Definitions of It

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Martínez Candela J et al.

Prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome and Insulin Resistance by Gender and Age Group

TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>WHO Criteria</th>
<th>NCEP Criteria</th>
<th>EGIR Criteria</th>
<th>IR (HOMA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-42 years (N=46)</td>
<td>14 (29.2%)</td>
<td>6 (12.5%)</td>
<td>12 (25.5%)</td>
<td>15 (31.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-54 years (N=32)</td>
<td>12 (36.8%)</td>
<td>9 (27.2%)</td>
<td>8 (24.2%)</td>
<td>8 (24.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-65 years (N=15)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65 years (N=10)</td>
<td>28 (86.7%)</td>
<td>13 (41.8%)</td>
<td>10 (30.3%)</td>
<td>17 (51.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=143)</td>
<td>62 (43.4%)</td>
<td>34 (23.8%)</td>
<td>41 (28.7%)</td>
<td>46 (32.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-42 years (N=46)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>9 (20.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-54 years (N=37)</td>
<td>10 (27%)</td>
<td>4 (10.8%)</td>
<td>6 (16.2%)</td>
<td>8 (21.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-65 years (N=25)</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td>10 (40.0%)</td>
<td>9 (36.0%)</td>
<td>7 (28.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65 years (N=42)</td>
<td>14 (33.2%)</td>
<td>15 (32.6%)</td>
<td>9 (21.4%)</td>
<td>11 (26.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=149)</td>
<td>41 (27.5%)</td>
<td>25 (16.8%)</td>
<td>29 (19.5%)</td>
<td>35 (23.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude prevalence†</td>
<td>35.3% (29.8-40.8)</td>
<td>20.2% (15.6-24.8)</td>
<td>24.1% (19.1-29.0)</td>
<td>27.9% (22.7-33.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence adjusted to the Spanish population†</td>
<td>35.3% (29.8-40.8)</td>
<td>20.3% (15.7-24.8)</td>
<td>24.1% (19.2-29.0)</td>
<td>27.9% (22.7-33.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MS WHO indicates metabolic syndrome according to the World Health Organisation; MS NCEP, metabolic syndrome according to the National Cholesterol Education Program criteria; MS EGIR, metabolic syndrome according to the European Group for the study of Insulin Resistance criteria; BMI, body mass index; DM, diabetes mellitus; IGT, impaired glucose tolerance; HDL-C, high density lipoprotein cholesterol; IR, insulin resistance.
†The values between parenthesis are the 95% confidence interval.

Prevalence of the Different Components of Metabolic Syndrome According to the Different Diagnostic Criteria. Prevalence According to Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cut Off Point, Criteria</th>
<th>Prevalence, %</th>
<th>By Gender,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity according to WHO BMI ≥30 or WHtR ≥0.95 (men) or ≥0.85 (women)</td>
<td>90.5 (3.3%)</td>
<td>98.1 (8.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waist circumference ≥94 cm (men) or ≥80 cm (women) (EGIR)</td>
<td>69.4 (5.1%)</td>
<td>65.8 (7.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood pressure ≥130/85 mm Hg or previous treatment (NCEP)</td>
<td>83.4 (5.3%)</td>
<td>68.4 (8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline glucose ≥110 mg/dL or DM treatment (NCEP, EGIR)</td>
<td>45.9 (3.7%)</td>
<td>51.7 (10.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides ≥150 mg/dL (NCEP, WHO)</td>
<td>15.9 (4.2%)</td>
<td>23.8 (6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOMA, homeostasis model assessment; IR, insulin resistance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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76 | Aten Primaria. 2006;38(2):72-81 |
and low HDL-C concentrations predominates in women, similar to that in the previously mentioned studies. The frequency of MS (NCEP) among diabetics (70.8%) is less than that detected by Lorenzo et al23 (64.6% in men, 92% in women) and in Finland25 (87.1%).

– If the WHO criteria are used, in our population we classify 35.3% of our population to have MS, a higher prevalence than that of Ford et al26 (26.6%) in the United States population, and similar to those of the DESIRE study (42.1%) and those of Finland25 (38.8% in men, 22.2% in women), for the same age group. The prevalence among diabetics (89.6%) is slightly higher than that obtained in the study by Bor-

The principal component of MS (WHO criteria) is obe-

As regards the level of concordance between definitions (WHO and NCEP), 78.8% of the participants in our study were similarly classified by both definitions (per-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age, years</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
<th>PPV</th>
<th>NPV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤65</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6: Diagnostic Validity of the Variables Which Had a Significant Value on Insulin Resistance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waist, cm</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤80</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;80</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;110</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline glucose, mg/dL</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤80</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;80</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;110</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triglycerides, mg/dL</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤80</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;80</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;110</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDL-C, mg/dL</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤40</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Despite the participation achieved in the study (68.9% of the selected population), it was slightly higher than that of other studies carried out in our country, such as that in the Canary Islands21 and the Spanish Insulin Resistance Study (SIRS) by Lorenzo et al23 and an acceptable response was not achieved in the women >65 years group, therefore an attempt was made to correct for this bias, which could underestimate the prevalence of MS, by adjusting the re-

The prevalence of the syndrome is high, more in men and increases with age, independent of the criteria used for its definition:

– If the NECP criteria are used, it is 20.2%, similar to that obtained in the Canary Isles (24.4%),22 and that of NHANES 1999-2000 in the United States population (27%).23 Of the different components of MS, high triglycerides, high BP and hyperglycaemia occur more frequently in men, while increase in waist circumference

**Table 5: Concordance Between the Different Criteria for the Diagnosis of Metabolic Syndrome**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Waist, cm</th>
<th>Triglycerides, mg/dL</th>
<th>Baseline glucose, mg/dL</th>
<th>HDL-C, mg/dL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCEP</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGIR</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMS</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7: Sensitivity, Specificity, Positive (PPV), and Negative (NPV) Predictive Value of Metabolic Syndrome Criteria to Predict Insulin Resistance (Homa-IR)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
<th>PPV</th>
<th>NPV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non MS</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGIR</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Despite the participation achieved in the study (68.9% of the selected population), it was slightly higher than that of other studies carried out in our country, such as that in the Canary Islands21 and the Spanish Insulin Resistance Study (SIRS) by Lorenzo et al23 and an acceptable response was not achieved in the women >65 years group, therefore an attempt was made to correct for this bias, which could underestimate the prevalence of MS, by adjusting the re-

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and low HDL-C concentrations predominates in women, similar to that in the previously mentioned studies. The frequency of MS (NCEP) among diabetics (70.8%) is less than that detected by Lorenzo et al23 (64.6% in men, 92% in women) and in Finland25 (87.1%).

– If the WHO criteria are used, in our population we classify 35.3% of our population to have MS, a higher prevalence than that of Ford et al26 (26.6%) in the United States population, and similar to those of the DESIRE study (42.1%) and those of Finland25 (38.8% in men, 22.2% in women), for the same age group. The prevalence among diabetics (89.6%) is slightly higher than that obtained in the study by Bor-
The increase in the prevalence of metabolic syndrome is associated with the rise in the population obesity indicators. The level of disagreement between the different definitions of the syndrome suggest the need for a definition which may be universally accepted, with a good predictive capability of IR and cardiovascular complications. In the multivariate analysis, the 4 variables that showed a significant association with the presence of IR were waist circumference, fasting glucose, triglycerides and age; therefore these have to be taken into account in any MS detection and prevention programme.

As regards the predictive capability of the different criteria of MS regarding the IR quantified by HOMA, we should point out that most clinical criteria of the NCEP have shown similar values of sensitivity (46%), specificity (90%) and PPV (63%) to those of Cheal et al.7 The level of disagreement between the different definitions of the syndrome suggest the need for a definition which may be universally accepted, with a good predictive capability of IR and cardiovascular complications. In the multivariate analysis, the 4 variables that showed a significant association with the presence of IR were waist circumference, fasting glucose, triglycerides and age; therefore these have to be taken into account in any MS detection and prevention programme.

We should suspect this disease in those subjects (men or women) who, having a waist circumference >90 cm, may have a fasting glucose level >100 mg/dL or triglycerides >150 mg/dL.

To summarise, metabolic syndrome is very common in our population, with a considerable variability in the preva-

lence of its component parts. The tendency for its frequency to increase in the next few decades (associated to the continuing increase in obesity in our population) could result in an increase in non-insulin dependent dia-

betes and cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in the area. To achieve changes in lifestyle aimed at reducing weight, waist circumference and an increase in physical activity, mainstay of the treatment of MS, as also described by other authors,29 should be priority objectives in health programmes of the area.

What Is Known About the Subject

- Obesity is one of the most important determining factors of metabolic syndrome.
- The increase in the prevalence of metabolic syndrome is associated with the rise in the population obesity indicators.

What This Study Contributes

- Metabolic syndrome is very common in our population, with a similar prevalence to that already known in the Canary Islands.
- A strategy that is easy to implement in daily clinical practice to detect insulin resistance with a good sensitivity and specificity.
- A universally accepted definition of the syndrome is needed given the level of disagreement between the current definitions.

References

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Martínez Candela J et al. Prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome in the Adult Population of Yecla (Murcia): Degree of Agreement Between Three Definitions of It


Metabolic syndrome is a clinical entity defined as group of metabolic changes due to insulin resistance. This situation produces disorders of glucose metabolism, increases in blood pressure levels, lipid disorders, and obesity. A, still unclear, predisposing genetic component has been identified in its etiology, along with a series of environmental factors, including those which are found in “classic” cardiovascular risk, such as central obesity, sedentary lifestyle, high calorie diet and smoking tobacco, and “emerging” factors, such as an increase in C reactive protein, increased fibrinogen and plasminogen activator inhibitor, high uric acid, leptin resistance, and high plasma cysteine.

The importance of metabolic syndrome lies in the increased probability of having cardiovascular complications in the long term. Its components are independent cardiovascular risk factors, and some—in particular obesity and insulin resistance—are factors which predispose the development of other risk factors, such as type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Although the absolute risk of cardiovascular complications in patients with metabolic syndrome has not been determined, there is data on the prevalence of coronary disease of approximately 1.4%2 in patients with metabolic syndrome, and there are studies that have shown morbidity and mortality figures considerably higher than the general population.3

Depending on the studies and the diagnostic method employed, the prevalence of metabolic syndrome in Spain varies between 24% and 30%, although more studies are required to be able to establish these figures with confidence. In this sense, the present study contributes by giving us more data by estimating the prevalence in its population.

Since we currently know not only the risk of cardiovascular complications of each of the separate components of metabolic syndrome, but also the efficacy of the interventions made on each of them, the need for timely detection of this entity and the design of appropriate interventions on the patients who present with it, with the aim of reducing the overall cardiovascular risk. On this point, this study makes two very interesting contributions: on the one hand, it demonstrates the need to homogenize the diagnostic criteria of metabolic syndrome, by verifying the lack of concordance between those used by the different scientific groups. This fact has also been verified by other studies. On the other hand, it studies the association of the variables which can predict insulin resistance—a metabolic anomaly involved in metabolic syndrome, in obesity, type 2 diabetes, and arteriosclerotic vascular disease—and verifies the diagnostic validity of these variables to be able to design future interventions on their population. Metabolic syndrome presents a good opportunity to fundamentally design specific interventions of lifestyle habits and drugs where necessary and personalised for each patient depending on their cardiovascular risk.

The fact that the prevention of cardiovascular complications still has a long way to go has to be reflected upon. And not just on the theoretical aspects, but also on the diagnostic and therapeutic applicability.
The abundance of guides and protocols—metabolic syndrome is a good example, but it also occurs to a lesser extent, in the case of hypertension or lipid disorders—all completely rigorous and with the same aim, but with variations in diagnostic criteria and cut off points, it sometimes makes the daily task difficult in the clinical consultations, particularly in overburdened care situations.

The quality achieved, as regards scientific education and technical training in the last few years has to be accompanied by suitable performance and interventions that really serve to improve the health of the population in our care. In this sense, it is worth remembering the fact that, despite having the knowledge and means necessary to control cardiovascular risk factors, the patients are not always diagnosed or suitably controlled. Only then can the final objective of our work be accomplished, which is to improve the health of the people in our care.

References