


STUDY OF PREVALENCE OF IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS) IN THE GENERAL POPULATION OF RIO DE JANEIRO - BRAZIL. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF IBS IN SOUTH AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) remains a clinical challenge in the 21st century. Various mechanisms and theories have been proposed about its etiology, but the biopsychosocial model is the most currently accepted. The prevalence of IBS in the general population ranges from 9% to 22%. However, the contrasts between different studies highlight the importance of standardizing diagnostic criteria, study methodology and subject populations and justify the importance of studies that standardize the prevalence of IBS in the various regions of the world, unifying the clinical therapeutic approach for these patients. This study aimed to study the prevalence of IBS in a group of volunteers in a Brazilian urban community using the personal interview research method. Our cross-sectional study included 700 university volunteers who completed a clinical epidemiological questionnaire and a Portuguese version of the Rome III modular questionnaire. The prevalence of IBS in this group was 12.4%. The factors highlighted by this study, when comparing the two groups of volunteers, were those related to the higher prevalence of IBS in women, the higher frequency of other gastrointestinal symptoms, and self-reported food intolerance. The prevalence rate was similar to that found in European countries and the USA. We believe that our study contributes to the literature in the specific area and consequently to better clinical and therapeutic management of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Keywords: Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Prevalence. Clinical Demographic Characteristics. South America. Brazil.

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INTRODUCTION

Functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGIDs) are a heterogeneous group of remarkably common chronic conditions that are considered important for public health and can be disabling and induce a great social and economic burden. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), characterized by abdominal pain and discomfort without obvious structural changes, one of the most common gastrointestinal diseases that remains a clinical challenge of the 21st century, is associated with the group of (FGIDs) and is a disorder of bowel function. IBS is the most prevalent FGID seen in the general population worldwide and also the most common reason for referral to gastroenterology clinics [1–5]. IBS may affect up to one in five people at some point in their lives and has a significant impact on quality of life and healthcare utilization. Several mechanisms and theories have been proposed regarding its etiology, but the biopsychosocial model is the most currently accepted for IBS [1,2,3]. The symptom complex would be the result of the interaction between psychological, behavioral, psychosocial and environmental factors. The pathogenesis of IBS is also associated with alterations in the intestinal microbiota, affecting immunity and intestinal integrity and altering the brain-gut axis and intestinal neuromuscular junctions. [6-15]. The diagnosis of IBS is not confirmed by a specific test or structural abnormality. The Rome Criteria are the current gold standard for the diagnosis of IBS [11,12]. The prevalence of IBS in the general population ranges from 9% to 22% in the USA and Western European countries. The contrasts between different studies highlight the importance of standardizing diagnostic criteria, study methodology and subject populations, all important factors that can influence the frequencies and clinical characteristics related to IBS. [15-20]. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of data from Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Arab countries, justifying the need for a global survey on the prevalence of IBS with multinational collaboration and uniform research methodology emphasizing regional and cross-cultural differences that are more likely to shed light on the pathophysiology. In South America, data are also limited and few studies have estimated the prevalence and burden of FGIDs. Most studies have been conducted in selected populations, emphasizing the need for more rigorous population-based studies using standard criteria and methodologies to study the prevalence of IBS in South America. [19-25]. The use of standardized criteria and methodology is imperative in future studies to elucidate the worldwide frequency and clinical features of IBS and justify the importance of studies that standardize the prevalence of IBS

in the various regions of the world, unifying the clinical therapeutic approach for these patients. This study will use the personal interview research method in an urban community.

OBJECTIVE

To study the prevalence of IBS in a group of volunteers in a Brazilian community.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

We conducted a cross-sectional study (Survey method: Personal Interview and Urban community). of prevalence and clinical demographic of IBS in Niteroi-Rio de Janeiro between October 2017 and December 2019. A total of 700 volunteers were evaluated between September 2017 and January 2019. They were selected between students and employees of the Medical School of the Fluminense Federal University, Niteroi, RJ, Brazil, recruited through a poster affixed on the door of the group of study of intestinal diseases (outpatient unit), Antonio Pedro Universitario Hospital (HUAP). The study included relatives of patients visiting hospitals, students and staff members of the hospital. Volunteers under-18s, those who refused to participate and reported a list of red flag symptoms and organic disorders that could be mistaken for IBS were excluded from the study. There we planned to estimate the prevalence of IBS using Rome III criteria A Portuguese language version of the Rome III modular questionnaire applied to 700 volunteers. [19-22] Clinical Socio demographic such mean age, sex, prevalence of IBS; prevalence of subtypes of IBS, self-reported food intolerance and presence of other digestive symptoms were evaluated. The non-probability sampling method was used in this study Ethics: This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. All volunteers gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study and the protocol was approved by the Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics, Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (approval no. 93546518.8.0000.5243). Statistical analysis: Statistical analysis was performed using IBM Corp. Released 2017. IBM SPSS statistics for windows, version 25.0. Armonk, NY: IBM corp. Analysis of categorical data was summarized by descriptive statistics, including total numbers, percentages and odds ratio (OR). The correlation analysis between variables was performed using Pearson's chi-square correlation coefficient. Continuous variables were summarized by mean and standard deviations (SD) with significant differences between two groups analyzed using the Independent Samples t-

test. All statistical hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, and $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

RESULTS

A total of 700 IBS patients were included in the study (467 women and 233 men) and were available for analysis. 87 (12.4%) met the Rome III criteria for IBS [mean age 30.4 ± 12.65 ; 95 (79.8%) women]. 55 (63.21%) of them reported gastrointestinal symptoms (self-reported food intolerance) after ingestion of food in general (gastrointestinal symptoms after ingestion of three or more foods, including gluten) and 44 (50.5%) who were designated as Group I IBS.

613 volunteers who did not meet the Rome III criteria for IBS, 215 (36.6 ± 21) women, mean age 36.6 ± 2 ; 162 (26.42%) reported self-reported food intolerance in general. They were designated as Group II without IBS. In both groups, positive responses to food intolerance in general were not concentrated in one or two foods, but were dispersed across several foods present in the Brazilian dietary pattern. None of the volunteers, with or without IBS, reported intolerance to only one food. In Group I, 44 (50.5%) volunteers reported other digestive symptoms not associated with foods or recurrent attacks compatible with a diagnosis of IBS, while in Group II, only 16.9% (104) of the volunteers frequently complained of other digestive symptoms. A personal history of self-reported food intolerance and other associated digestive differed significantly when the two groups were compared ($P < 0.04$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most common gastrointestinal diseases characterized by recurrent symptoms and multifactorial etiopathogenesis. There are no biological markers available for diagnosis of IBS [1-5]. With an estimated global prevalence of 10% to 20% [1-5], in European countries and the United States it ranges from 9% to 22%. In Latin America, there are few studies that have estimated the prevalence and burden of FGIDs, and most have been conducted in selected populations. Data for this region are limited, emphasizing the need for more rigorously conducted population-based studies reporting the prevalence of IBS in South America. Estimating the global prevalence of IBS is essential to understanding the burden and distribution of the disease. The incidence and prevalence of IBS have been studied systematically, but there are significant

variations in the results that may be due to study designs or geographic regions. The contrasts between the different studies highlight the importance of diagnostic criteria, study methodology, and subject populations, all important factors that may influence the reported frequencies of IBS and clinical subtypes of IBS. [22-62]

Our cross-sectional study included 700 university volunteers who completed a clinical epidemiological questionnaire and a Portuguese version of the Rome III modular questionnaire. The prevalence of IBS in this group was 12.4%. The factors highlighted by this study, when comparing the two groups of volunteers, were those related to the higher prevalence of IBS in women, the higher frequency of other gastrointestinal symptoms, and self-reported food intolerance. The prevalence rate was similar to that found in European countries and the USA. [19-24] However, prevalence varies between countries due to different diagnostic criteria used in studies and the use of different diagnostic criteria.

The prevalence of IBS was higher in women, as reported in most worldwide studies. [4, 22-62] Most reported global prevalence studies have found a female predominance for IBS. Of the total number of volunteers evaluated with IBS, 280 (70%) were women. These findings raise a relevant question. Do women pay more attention to their own health, seek more health services, and agree to participate in medical research more often than men? The answer is affirmative and deserves further studies on the subject.

From a pathophysiological perspective, it is believed that sex hormones may promote gender differences by affecting stress hormones, the immune response, gut-brain interactions, intestinal barrier functionality, and the gut microbiome [1,4,6-8,15]

When we evaluated the groups in relation to the prevalence of general food intolerance (gastrointestinal symptoms after ingestion of three or more foods), we found that the number of positive responses regarding general food intolerance was higher in volunteers diagnosed with IBS when compared to Group II. These results also confirm that food self-intolerance is significantly associated with IBS. Often, many patients with IBS report that their symptoms are triggered by the ingestion of certain food groups. Our results are in agreement with most studies. Several food groups, such as fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, polyols and gluten/wheat, have been recognized as possible triggers of symptoms compatible with the diagnosis of IBS [1,63-71]. These findings have therapeutic implications for IBS patients who identify the group of food intakes that trigger their symptoms.

In our study, the frequency of other digestive symptoms was significantly higher in volunteers who met the criteria for the diagnosis of IBS. Also, in a recent study we reported that the proportion of patients undergoing endoscopic (ED) procedures were women and the prevalence of dyspeptic symptoms and the percentage of normal esophagogastroduodenoscopy were significantly higher in women than in men [4]. Studies of individual dyspeptic symptoms have demonstrated sex-related differences in prevalence, as well as in gastric emptying and visceral sensitivity [1, 13-15]. Female sex has also been associated with a higher prevalence of functional digestive diseases [4-6,16-20]. The mechanisms involved in the pathophysiological changes found in FGID appear to be multiple and are still unclear [9-11,20,21]. A unifying hypothesis for the more frequent generation of these symptoms in women could be the phenomenon of visceral hypersensitivity identified in most patients with FGID associated with differences in the effects of female hormones, since estrogen and progesterone receptors are present throughout the gastrointestinal tract [12-14]. Our results reinforce that the mechanisms of digestive symptoms are multifactorial and the new concept of disorders of brain-gut interaction (GBI) [1,8,15].

The factors highlighted in our study are consistent with previous studies specifically designed to study the prevalence of IBS worldwide. However, it is worth noting that prevalence varied between some of the countries studied [65]. The contrasts between these different studies highlight the importance of diagnostic criteria, study methodology, and subject populations, all important factors that can influence the reported frequencies and clinical features of IBS. The Rome Foundation and the World Gastroenterology Organization (WGO) [21] on the global perspective of IBS concluded that it was necessary to conduct population-based studies to estimate the frequency of this functional bowel disorder worldwide. We believe that our study contributes to the literature in the specific area and consequently to better clinical and therapeutic management of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

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