

# **Epidemiology of Celiac Disease in Children in Albania and Psychological Implications of the Disease**

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## **Abstract:**

*Aims:* to describe the most recent data on the epidemiology of celiac disease in paediatric patients in Albania.

*Method:* 44 patients diagnosed with celiac disease (based on ESPHAGAN's criteria) during 2011-2013. The diagnosis was established using serological testing, level of tTG antibodies (IgA) as well as the degree of mucosal lesions through duodenal biopsy using endoscopy of upper gastro-intestinal tract. March classification was used to evaluate degree of histological changes in the small bowel.

*Results and discussions:* we had 26 girls and 16 boys, age interval 1-15 years, mean age for girls was 5,80 (1,1-13,8) and for boys was 6,09 (1,8-14,0). Symptoms presented were as follows: 38% had growth and developmental delays, 20% chronic diarrhoea, 11% abdominal pain, 7% vomiting, 4.5% anaemia, 3% abdominal distention, 2.2% chronic constipation, 2,2% irritability (asthenia) and 11% other symptoms. One in four patients had other associated disorders such as diabetes mellitus type 1 (n=4), genetic syndromes (n=2), autism spectrum disorders (n=2), hypothyreosis (n=1), IGF1 deficit (n=1). Mean value for tTG-IgA in girls was 137,8% (1,0-800) and in boys was 120,1 (2,0-369,). The histology of small bowel was consistent with March classification: T1-11,3% T2-18,18%, T3a- 20,4% T3b-9,0%, T3c-2,27%. The biopsy was not performed in 38.6% of entire sample. A positive correlation between morphological degree of changes and the level of tTG-IgA was found. High degree of March lesions was associated with high levels of antibodies tTG-IgA. All children were put in gluten-free diet. The follow up was done by evaluating weight, height, and level of tTG-IgA one year after being in gluten free diet.

*Conclusions:* Presentation with non-specific symptoms or a lack of symptoms is common and for early identification of celiac disease it is necessary serological testing in at risk groups.

## **Keywords**

Celiac Disease, Children, Epidemiology