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A Benchmarking Study Evaluating the Burden of Axial Spondyloarthritis in Spain compared with the Rest of European countries. Results of the Spanish Atlas and EMAS studies.

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Background:

Benchmarking studies in axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA) may provide evidence of disparities, making it necessary to improve the healthcare and management of these patients.

Objectives:

To evaluate differences between Spain and the rest of Europe (RoE) in relation to sociodemographic characteristics, life habits, and patient-reported outcomes (PROs) in axSpA patients.

Methods:

Data from 2,846 unselected patients from the European Map of Axial Spondyloarthritis (EMAS) were collected through an online survey, with a comparative analysis of 680 Spanish patients (2016) and 2,166 patients living in 12 other European countries (2017-2018). Socio-demographic characteristics, life habits, and PROs [BASDAI (0-10), spinal stiffness (3-12), and psychological distress (0-12, General Health Questionnaire GHQ-12)] were compared. The X² test was used for qualitative variables and the Mann-Whitney test applied for quantitative variables.

Results:

Data from 680 (23.9%) Spanish patients were compared to 2,166 (76.1%) patients from the RoE. Compared to Spain, the RoE patients reported a higher percentage of females (64.1% vs 52.5%; $p < 0.001$), university studies (51.7% vs 36.9%; $p < 0.001$) and higher income per family member (€1,173.5 vs €823.2; $p < 0.001$). In Spain, the proportion of respondents who were members of patient associations was higher than in RoE (44.3% vs 37.2%; $p < 0.001$) (Table 1). Also compared to RoE, Spanish patients showed a greater diagnostic delay (8.5 ± 7.7 vs 7.2 ± 8.6 ; $p < 0.001$), HLA-B27 carriership (77.1% vs 70.1%; $p = 0.003$), and disease activity (5.7 ± 2.0 vs 5.4 ± 2.0 ; $p = 0.024$). Despite lower diagnosis of anxiety and depression rates, Spanish patients reported greater psychological distress (5.7 ± 4.5 vs 4.8 ± 4.0 ; $p < 0.001$). However, RoE patients declared greater spinal stiffness compared to Spanish patients (7.8 ± 2.4 vs 7.5 ± 2.7 ; $p = 0.009$) (Table 2).

Conclusion:

In this study, significant differences between Spanish and RoE patients were observed for the burden of the disease in patients with axSpA. Patients in Spain experience a greater diagnostic delay and greater psychological distress.

References:

Table 1. Comparison of socio-demographic characteristics and lifestyle habits of axSpA patients in Spain and in RoE

	Spain (n = 680) Mean \pm SD; n (%)	RoE (n = 2,166) Mean \pm SD; n (%)	p-value
Age (Years)	45.7 \pm 10.8	43.4 \pm 12.6	<0.001*
Gender (Female)	357 (52.5)	1389 (64.1)	<0.001*
Educational level			
- No schooling	9 (1.3)	23 (1.1)	<0.001*
- Primary school	119 (17.5)	144 (6.6)	
- High school	301 (44.3)	880 (40.6)	
- University	251 (36.9)	1,119 (51.7)	
Monthly income (€) per household member	823.2 \pm 656.4	1,173.5 \pm 928.8	<0.001*
Smoking			
- Non-smoker or socially	417 (71.3)	1,679 (77.5)	<0.001*
- Less than 10 cig/day	24 (4.1)	111 (5.1)	
- More than 10 cig/day	144 (24.6)	376 (17.4)	
Alcohol			
- Never or occasionally	503 (86.0)	1,723 (79.5)	<0.001*
- 1–2 times per week	37 (6.3)	292 (13.5)	
- More than 2 per week	45 (7.7)	151 (7.0)	
Member of a patient support group	301 (44.3)	806 (37.2)	0.001*

Table 2. Comparison of PROs of axSpA patients between Spain and RoE

	Spain (n = 680) Mean \pm SD; n (%)	RoE (n = 2166) Mean \pm SD; n (%)	p value
Diagnostic delay, years	8.5 \pm 7.7	7.2 \pm 8.6	<0.001*
HLA-B27 (positive)	391 (77.1)	892 (70.1)	0.003*
BASDAI (0–10)	5.7 \pm 2.0	5.4 \pm 2.0	0.024*
Spinal Stiffness (3–12)	7.5 \pm 2.7	7.8 \pm 2.4	0.009*
GHQ-12 (0–12)	5.7 \pm 4.5	4.8 \pm 4.0	<0.001*
Anxiety	135 (19.9)	674 (33.1)	<0.001*
Depression	100 (14.7)	610 (30.0)	<0.001*

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