

Incidence of insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus in Jordanian children aged 0–14 y during 1992–1996

K Ajlouni¹, Y Qusous², AK Khawaldeh², H Jaddou³, A Batiehah³, F Ammari³, M Zaheri⁴ and A Mashal⁵

National Center for Diabetes Endocrine & Genetic Diseases¹; King Hussain Medical Center²; Jordan University of Science Technology, Irbid³, Jordan; Private Practice⁴, Amman; Islamic Hospital⁵, Amman

Ajlouni K, Qusous Y, Khawaldeh AK, Jaddou H, Batiehah A, Ammari F, Zaheri M, Mashal A. Incidence of insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus in Jordanian children aged 0–14 y during 1992–1996. *Acta Pædiatr* 1999; Suppl 427: 11–3. Stockholm. ISSN 0803–5326

An attempt was made by the Jordanian National Center for Diabetes, Endocrine and Genetic Diseases (NCDEGD) to identify all cases of type 1 diabetes among Jordanian children aged 0–14 y. Data were obtained retrospectively for the years 1992–1994 and prospectively for the years 1995 and 1996, including full name, national identifying number, date of birth, date of diagnosis and family history. The incidence was calculated as the number of cases per 100 000 population, according to the national census of 1994. The incidence rate for these years (1992 through 1996) was 2.8, 2.9, 3.2, 3.6 and 3.6 per 100 000 population, respectively. The male:female ratio was (1:1.03). Seasonal variation at clinical onset was noticed, with maximum incidence in the winter months and minimum incidence in the summer months. In conclusion, the incidence of type 1 diabetes mellitus in Jordanian children aged 0–14 y is among the lowest in the region, but is rising. □ *Children, incidence, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, Jordan, type 1 diabetes*

K Ajlouni, National Center for Diabetes, Endocrine and Genetic Diseases, P.O. Box 13165, Amman, Jordan

There is growing interest in the epidemiology of type 1 diabetes, as manifested by the number of international study groups, such as Diabetes Epidemiology Research International (DERI) (1, 2), Eurodiab Aetiology of Childhood Diabetes on an Epidemiological Basis (ACE) (3) and the World Health Organization's Diabète Mondial (WHO DIAMOND) (4). Previously, it was thought that diabetes mellitus was a disease of wealthy or more developed countries, but recent studies have shown that it is also a disease of developing countries (5). Several reports have shown an increase in the prevalence of diabetes in developing countries as they adopt western lifestyles (6) and in migrants from developing to developed countries (7, 8). Data on the incidence of type 1 diabetes in developing countries (9–13) support an increasing trend in the incidence of type 1 diabetes mellitus (10–12). Although there are few studies reported on the epidemiology of insulin-dependent diabetes (IDDM) in Arab countries (8–13) there have been no previous reports from Jordan.

Country background

In Jordan, healthcare services are provided by five sectors. The Ministry of Health (MOH) cares for all government employees, those on social aid and the dependants of these groups (40% of the population).

The Royal Medical Services (RMS) provides care for the army, police, security and their dependants (38% of the population). The Universities Health System (UHS) takes care of all university students, university employees and their dependants (8% of the population). United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian Refugees and the private sector take care of the rest of the population (16%). In early 1995 the National Center for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Genetic diseases (NCDEGD) was established with the objective of unifying efforts to study the incidence, aetiology, prevention and treatment of these diseases in Jordan.

Data collection

The identification of cases of IDDM was among the priorities of the NCDEGD. Early in 1995, a campaign was launched by NCDEGD to identify cases of IDDM using mass media (newspapers, television and radio). A form appeared in local newspapers with a request for patients or their guardians to complete. Similar forms were distributed to all hospitals and paediatric clinics in the country and to public and private schools. Data collected included national identity numbers (which are unique for every citizen), full names, dates of birth, dates of first insulin injection and history of diabetes

Table 1. Incidence of type 1 diabetes mellitus in Jordan 1992–1996 (cases per 100 000 per year among children 0–14 y of age) by year of diagnosis and sex.

Year of diagnosis	Population	Cases	Males	Females	Incidence
1996	1845958	66	34	32	3.6
1995	1774960	64	34	30	3.6
1994	1703962	55	28	27	3.2
1993	1635864	47	22	25	2.9
1992	1570372	43	22	21	2.8

mellitus in first- and second-degree relatives. Following this campaign, reports of newly diagnosed cases in all hospitals, and paediatric clinics were collected on a monthly basis by an endocrinologist. The data for the present study were prospective for the years 1995 and 1996 and retrospective for the years 1992–1994. To verify the completeness of ascertainment, we obtained data from the supply departments of the MOH, RMS, and UHS including national identity numbers, names and dates of first order of insulin. These constituted the secondary data source, which was checked against the primary data source, described above, using the capture-recapture method. The degree of ascertainment was 95%. The population data were obtained from the Jordanian National Bureau of Statistics based on the 1994 census with extrapolation for other years. Incidence was calculated as the number of newly diagnosed subjects per 100 000 persons for the different age and sex groups.

Results

A total of 275 new cases of IDDM were identified among children aged 0–14 y, during the study period 1992–1996. The distribution of cases by year of diagnosis (first insulin injection) is presented in Table 1. The incidence varied from 2.8/100 000 in 1992 to 3.6/100 000 in 1996, with no difference between males and females.

Table 2 shows the average annual age-specific incidence, with the highest incidence (5.5/100 000) among children 10–14 y of age and the lowest. (1.3/100 000) among children < 4 y of age. Seasonal variation was noticed, with maximum incidence in the winter months and minimum incidence in the summer months.

Discussion

The present study constitutes the first report on type 1 diabetes from Jordan. There is a wide variation in the incidence of IDDM among populations (6–14), with the highest being in Finland (15) and Sardinia (16) and the lowest being in the Far East (17). In addition, there is a general increase in the incidence of type 1 diabetes in many European (18–21) and Middle Eastern countries.

Table 2. Age-specific and sex-specific incidence rates (cases per 100 000 per year) of type 1 diabetes among children aged 0–14 year, Jordan 1992–1996.

Age (y)	Diabetics	Incidence	Males	Females
0–4	39	1.3	19	20
5–9	90	3.2	47	43
10–14	146	5.5	74	72
Total	275	3.2	140	135

Data from Israel (8), Sudan (9), Libya (11), Oman (12) and Kuwait (13) show an increasing pattern of IDDM. A similar pattern is present in Jordan. Our data show an increase in the incidence of IDDM between 1992 and 1996, which could be due to environmental factors, better registration or, alternatively, may be a chance finding. The incidence of IDDM among Jordanian children was close to that among Israeli Arabs (8), but much lower than among Israeli Jews (Ashkenazi, non-Ashkenazi and Yemenite) (8).

The high incidence of IDDM observed among Yemenite Jews settled in Israel and the four-fold increase in Kuwait (13) in the past decade are alarming and difficult to explain on genetic basis alone. These changes support the important role of social and environmental factors in IDDM. Rapid economic growth, industrialization, the associated nutritional habits and the adoption of western lifestyles may explain these recent trends in IDDM.

In accordance with the majority of published literature, the incidence rate in our study increased with age, with no significant differences between male and female children. The seasonal variation at diagnosis is also similar (22), with more diagnoses in the winter and fewer in the summer months.

In conclusion, the incidence of IDDM in Jordan is still low, but is increasing.

Acknowledgments.—The authors acknowledge the assistance of Drs A. Kheir, A. Madanat and all the physicians working in the healthcare centres of the MOH. This research was supported by grants from the universities of Jordan, Yarmouk, Science and Technology, Al-Albyat, Motah, Hashemiah, WHO and the Higher Council for Science and Technology in Jordan.

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