How prevalent is epilepsy in Europe?

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Joint Task Force, Epilepsy Advocacy Europe
Workshop on the Cost and Prevalence of Epilepsy
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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

Will outline...

(1) Determining epilepsy prevalence.
(2) The number of studies conducted in Europe.
(3) Where studies have, or have not, been undertaken.
(4) The range of prevalence estimates.
(5) Variations in studies.
Determining Prevalence

- Typically determine the number of people in a sample (e.g. region/hospital/centre) who have:
  - Active epilepsy (experience seizures)
  - Treated epilepsy (on AEDs; may be controlled)
  - Lifetime epilepsy (have ever had epilepsy)

- Findings are presented as X per 1,000 people.
- Extrapolate estimate to the bigger population = number of people with epilepsy.
PREVIOUS REVIEWS IN EUROPE

• ILAE, IBE and WHO (2010) examined:
• 53 countries covering 850 million people.
• Using a prevalence of 8.2 per 1,000.
• Based on WHO Atlas survey.
• Not just ‘active’ epilepsy.

= 6 million people with epilepsy
Previous Reviews in Europe

• Study by Gustavsson et al., (2010) on the cost of brain disorders examined:
  • 30 countries covering 514 million people.
  • Used 34 existing country specific prevalence estimates referenced in publications 2004+.
  • Median prevalence = 5.3 (4.0-6.5).
  • Not just active epilepsy.
  • = 2.6 million people
SEARCHING FOR PREVALENCE STUDIES

- Search of academic databases using the terms ‘epilepsy’ AND ‘prevalence’.
- Published in English language.
- From 1982-2012 (three decades).
- One paper per study.
- Excluded subpopulations – older persons, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons in prisons.
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Databases Searched

- Embase
- Science Direct
- Pubmed
- Psycinfo/Abstract (EBSCO host)
- Wiley Online
- Web of science/web of knowledge
The number of studies conducted throughout Europe

- Identified 6,593 papers with terms in the summary.
- Identified 1,335 papers with terms in titles.
- In total **76 eligible studies** were identified published between 1982 and 2012.
Studies on the prevalence of epilepsy across Europe by decade

- 1982-1989: 4 studies
- 1990-1999: 27 studies
- 2000-2009: 29 studies
- 2010-2012: 16 studies
WHERE STUDIES HAVE, OR HAVE NOT, BEEN UNDERTAKEN

• These studies were undertaken throughout 21 of the 49 countries of Europe (43%).
WHERE STUDIES HAVE, OR HAVE NOT, BEEN UNDERTAKEN

- The 21 countries comprise:
  - 13 of the 27 EU Member States (50%)
  - 2 ‘candidate’ countries
  - 1 ‘acceding’ country
  - 1 ‘potential’ country
  - 4 Non EU States
COUNTRIES WITH > 10 STUDIES

- UK leads – 16 studies from 1983 to 2012
- Turkey -11 studies from 1995 – 2012
- Italy – 10 studies from 1983 -2012

• Nearly half of all studies (49%; 37/76) have been conducted in just three countries.
COUNTRIES WITH 3-4 STUDIES

- Denmark – 4 studies from 1986 to 2007
- Finland – 4 studies from 1989 to 2009
- NL - 4 studies from 1996 – 2008
- Norway – 4 studies from 2000 – 2012
- Spain – 4 studies from 1991 -2012
- Sweden – 3 studies from 1992 - 2006
COUNTRIES WITH 1-2 STUDIES

Two studies:

- Croatia
- Estonia
- France
- Iceland

One study:

- Albania
- Azerbaijan
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Lithuania
- Russia
Studies of epilepsy prevalence throughout Europe (in English)
At first glance ...

- Large areas of Eastern Europe are unrepresented.
- Most studies are regional – national data are rare.
- Might the English language criterion explain the low complement of studies in some countries (e.g. France (2) and Germany (1)?)
Variation in Studies

- Age ranges (difficult to classify)
  - 42 studies over all age groups (e.g. 0-39 years)
  - 12 adults only (e.g. 55–95 years)
  - 22 children only (e.g. 0-5 years)

- Size of extrapolated population
  - 4.9 million in Danish hospital registration study
  - 1,625 in children’s study, Eastern Turkey
THE RANGE OF PREVALENCE ESTIMATES

Mindful of comparing apples and oranges..
VARIATION ACROSS STUDIES IN ‘ACTIVE’

2.26 – “cases of active epilepsy & epilepsy in remission with treatment” (Greece)

10.9 – cases of active epilepsy (one seizure in past 5 years) (Croatia)

Considerable variation in rates.
INTRA-COUNTRY VARIATION

In Italy:
• active epilepsy 2.7 to 6.63
• treated epilepsy 4.9 to 11.9

In Turkey:
• active epilepsy 3.7 to 10.2

In the UK:
• treated epilepsy 4.5 to 7.4
• lifetime epilepsy 4 to 21
THE TYPES OF METHODOLOGIES THAT HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED

• Most are ‘multi-source’ ascertainment from medical services – primary care, general hospitals, neurology centres, etc.
• One third (25; 33%) are population-based using door to door methodologies, screenings in schools, communities, etc.
• Prescription databases (11 studies) have also been used with varying algorithms to identify people with epilepsy.
How many people have epilepsy?

- If population of Europe is 738 million (as per Eurostat/UN World Population)
  - Minimum active rate @ 2.3 = 1,697,000
  - Maximum active rate @ 10.9 = 8,044,000

- Difficult to plan / develop policy
- Can we be more accurate?
“The purpose of this document is to promote consistency in definitions and methods in an effort to enhance future population-based epidemiologic studies, facilitate comparison between populations, and encourage the collection of data useful for the promotion of public health” (p.2)
To conclude

• Across three decades, 76 studies were completed in 21 countries.
• Nearly half of all studies are undertaken in just three countries.
• Many are regional - national data are rare.
• Large areas of Europe are unrepresented.
• Definitions and estimates vary widely.

Thank you