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## Prevalence, demographics and clinical features of multiple sclerosis in Bahrain

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**Background:** In the Arab world the reported prevalence of MS varies widely from 3.4 to 42/100,000. Data from neighboring Arabian Gulf countries (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Qatar) show increasing prevalence and incidence of MS. No studies are reported from Bahrain that share same ethnic background.

**Objectives:** This study aims to estimate incidence, prevalence, demographics and clinical characteristics, including EB Virus status and Vitamin D3 level estimation of MS patients in Bahrain. **Methods:** Data for all MS Bahraini patients fulfilling McDonald criteria (2010) and seen in Salmaniya Medical Complex, Manama, Bahrain, from 1st July 2011 till 31st October 2013, were analyzed. We already established an MS registry in the hospital.

**Results:** Two hundred and eighty-seven MS Bahraini patients were identified. The female to male ratio was 2.49:1. The mean age of onset was 35.710.2 years. The prevalence of MS in 2013 was 59.9/100,000 (95% C.I. 41.99–57.55) with an annual incidence rate of 5.8/100,000 (95% C.I. 2.8–8.87) during 2012-2013. The median and mean expanded disability status scale (EDSS) was 2.0 and 3.0 respectively on presentation. 36.6% presented with optic neuritis, 32.4% had sensory symptoms and 62.0% had motor presentation while 32% had brain stem and 9% had pure cerebellar ataxia. 64.7% of our patients are EBV Seropositive (EBNA positive).

**Conclusion:** Bahrain should be considered as one of the countries with high risk for MS. This high prevalence is consistent with what reported from neighboring Arabian gulf countries. Studies are in need to elaborate more in the role of genetic and environmental factors in this increasing risk of MS.