Celiac Disease Among Schoolchildren in Egypt: Results of a Pilot Study
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Introduction. The CD prevalence in developing countries is unclear, although occasional data suggest that CD prevalence could be high in Northern Africa and Middle East countries. In these areas, untreated CD may contribute to childhood mortality by worsening the vicious circle of diarrhea-malnutrition.

Aims (1) To investigate the CD prevalence in a cohort of school age children in Egypt; (2) To describe the main presenting symptoms of CD in this country.

Study-design. Children were screened for CD at school in Cairo City after obtaining informed consent from their parents. Serum antiendomysium Ab (EMA) determination was performed in subjects that tested positive for anti-tTG IgA Ab. Small intestinal biopsy was recommended to subjects showing either IgA anti-tTG and EMA positivity or IgA deficiency plus IgG anti-tTG positivity.

Results. To date, 1064 children have been screened and 5 subjects (1:213), 3 females and 2 males aged 6-18 yrs, were diagnosed with CD (biopsy-proven). Three of these children experienced anemia and two showed intestinal complaints (diarrhea and abdominal pain). Following the screening, CD was also diagnosed in the father of one of these cases.

Conclusions. These preliminary results indicate that CD in the Egyptian pediatric population is as frequent as in Europe and North America.