



P 32 Current situation on the epidemiology of Lyme borreliosis in Europe

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Lyme Borreliosis (LB) is the most common tick-borne infectious disease in Europe. Caused by spirochaetes of the *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Bb) sensu lato complex, it is a multisystem disease affecting primarily the skin, joints, heart, and nervous system. In Europe, borreliae are transmitted by the hard ticks *Ixodes ricinus* and *I. persulcatus*. Despite the fact that LB is very common throughout Europe, little data are available on its epidemiology in several European countries. Its incidence varies both between and within European countries.

Data on the incidence of LB in Europe were collected by searching medical databases, accessing national health registries and national health service sources, and by personal contact. LB incidence data retrieved from 26 countries demonstrated marked heterogeneity. This is due to the sources from which the data are collected, the clinical manifestations selected for epidemiological purposes, and variations in referral patterns and laboratory diagnosis.

EM comprises up to 99.2% (range 69–99.2%) of LB cases reported throughout Europe, whereas disseminated manifestations such as neuroborreliosis (NB) range from 0.9% up to 19.6%. The incidence of LB shows increasing trends, from south-western Europe (Portugal $<0.4/10^5$) and the Mediterranean region to the North (Sweden $69/10^5$) as well as from western Europe (England and Wales, $1.52/10^5$) to central (Switzerland $I=115/10^5$) and eastern Europe (Slovenia $I=236/10^5$).

LB is present in most European countries with distinct regional variations in incidence. This might be due to the differing approaches to data acquisition and biases in those sources, varying case definitions, the type and year of study, and whether compulsory or voluntary reporting were used. To provide consistency and reliability in inter-country reporting, data acquisition and case definitions should be standardized as should the training of primary care physicians in LB diagnosis.