



Knowledge of Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis among Israeli pediatricians might improve early referral and disease outcomes

Dana Schujovitzky^{1,2}, Amit Ziv^{1,2}, Merav Heshin Bekenstein^{2,3}, Sharon Eylon⁴, Zachi Grossman⁵, Philip J Hashkes⁶, Yosef Uziel^{1,2}, Ruby Haviv^{1,2}

¹Pediatric Rheumatology Unit, Department of Pediatrics, Meir Medical Center, Kfar Saba, Israel. ²Sackler School of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel. ³Pediatric Rheumatology Clinic, Department of Pediatrics, Dana-Dwek Children's Hospital, Tel Aviv, Israel. ⁴Pediatric Orthopedic Service, Alyn Rehabilitation for Children & Adolescents, Jerusalem, Israel, Chair of the Israel Pediatric Orthopedic Society. ⁵Adelson School of Medicine, Ariel University, Ariel, Israel and Maccabi Healthcare Services, Tel Aviv, Israel. ⁶Paediatric Rheumatology Unit, Shaare Zedek Medical Centre, Jerusalem, Israel.

Background: Approximately 1 child in 1,000 is affected by chronic juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA). Persistent, undiagnosed JIA with high disease activity interferes with daily life and carries a risk of irreversible physical and psychosocial damage. Due to its relative rarity, primary physicians often do not recognize it; thus, diagnosis and referral to pediatric rheumatologists are delayed.

Aim: To evaluate the knowledge of Israeli pediatricians and pediatric-orthopedic surgeons regarding epidemiology, clinical manifestations, laboratory parameters and treatment of JIA.

Methods: An 11-item online questionnaire regarding JIA sent to the lists of Israeli Society of Pediatrics and Pediatric Orthopedics, was completed by 274 pediatricians and 27 pediatric-orthopedic surgeons.

Results: Average score was 67.8% overall participants. Several groups were associated with better overall scores: hospital physicians compared to community physicians; pediatric residents (especially after board exams) compared to seniors; exposure to rheumatology during residency; and more JIA patients during the last 5 years. No significant difference was found between pediatricians and pediatric-orthopedic surgeons. 40% of participants underestimated the true incidence of JIA; 30-45% were not familiar with its clinical

presentation (age of onset, pain characteristics, chronic uveitis symptoms), and up to 65% were not familiar with up-to-date treatments.

Conclusions: Israeli pediatricians and pediatric-orthopedic surgeons have misconceptions regarding JIA. This could result in delayed referral and treatment, which might affect outcomes. The results of this study highlight the need for better education and exposure to a rheumatologist, leading to the goals of better health and quality of life for JIA patients by improving knowledge.