

Low Prevalence of Psoriasis in Norwegian Lapps

G. KAVLI,¹ S. E. STENVOLD¹ and Ø. VANDBAKK²

¹Department of Dermatology, University of Tromsø, Tromsø and ²District General practitioner, Kautokeino, Norway

Kavli G, Stenvold SE, Vandbakk Ø. Low prevalence of psoriasis in Norwegian lapps. *Acta Derm Venereol (Stockh)* 1985; 65:262-263.

The prevalence of psoriasis was found to be 0.6% in 2000 pure Lapps from Kautokeino. Similar low prevalences have been found in Mongolians and Eskimos. HL-A studies have suggested a common origin for these populations. (Received December 14, 1984).

G. Kavli, Department of Dermatology, University of Tromsø, N-9012 Norway.

The prevalence of psoriasis is lower in subjects of Mongolian race (1, 2, 3) than in Caucasians. The community of Kautokeino in Finnmark, the northernmost county in Norway is predominantly populated by Lapps. Their origin is unknown, possibly Mongolian, possibly are they descendents of an ancient Nordic population (4). They are proud of their inheritance, intermarriage with Caucasians is a rarity and they have claimed aboriginal status. One of the authors (Ø. V.) has during 20 years as district general practitioner of Kautokeino acquired first-hand knowledge of health conditions among Lapps. During the first 10 years exceptionally few cases of psoriasis were seen. In order to establish the prevalence of psoriasis among Lapps this cooperative study was initiated.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A continuous registration of psoriasis was carried out among pure Lapps in Kautokeino 1975-1979. At the Tromsø Department of Dermatology a survey of the registered inpatient and outpatient psoriatics was carried out.

RESULTS

A total of 11 cases of psoriasis, 6 females, 5 males, were found among the approximately 2000 Lapps of Kautokeino. This gives an estimated prevalence of psoriasis of approximately 0.6%. Five patients were registered at the Tromsø Department of Dermatology. Four had been examined at our regular decentralized dermatological consultations in Finnmark. Only 1 Lapp has been hospitalized for psoriasis in our department: in 1975 a boy of 9 was admitted for a generalized, guttate outbreak of psoriasis following a streptococcal throat infection. Psoriasis arthritis was diagnosed in 1 patient: a 61-year-old woman.

DISCUSSION

We find a psoriasis prevalence of 0.6% among Lapps. This is in accordance with the findings of Yiu Yip (3) who recently reported a prevalence well below 1% in Mongolians.

HLA studies have shown that the Lapps have lower frequencies of HL-A1, 8 and 12 than Caucasians. HL-A1 is low or absent in Eskimos (6) and Mongolians (7). These findings suggest a closer relationship of Lapps to Eskimos than to non-Lappish Norwegians (5). Also Eskimos from Greenland the prevalence of psoriasis has been low (1).

Thorsby (5) found a higher prevalence of HLA-B27 (25%) in Lapps than in Caucasians (10%). In certain Indian tribes the frequency of HLA B27 has been found to be high (20–50%) but apparently without an increased prevalence of ankylosing spondylitis (8). This is in agreement with our findings that approximately 1 out of 10 Lapps with psoriasis also has arthritis.

Further genetic studies of pure Lapps may be of value in research on inheritance of psoriasis.

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