

Digestive Health and Measuring Hygiene. Are Doctors and Patients Compliant?

Garcia Román Maria Fernanda^{1*}, Molina Llorente Paula¹, Fernandez Jorde Sonia², Rivera Panizo Ines³, Fontanillas Garmilla Noelia¹

¹ Bezana Health Center, Cantabrian Health Service, Santander, Spain

² Meruelo Health Center, Cantabrian Health Service

³ Los Gladiolos Health Center, Canary Islands Health Service. Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Spain

*Corresponding author: Garcia Román Maria Fernanda, Bezana Health Center, Cantabrian Health Service, Santander, Spain.

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Abstract

Introduction

Objective

To evaluate symptoms and lifestyle habits that influence on digestive health of patients attending primary care offices, comparing them with a group of family doctors.

Methodology

A descriptive observational study.

There were included seven tracked variables: age, sex, heartburn, heavy digestion, abdominal bloating, bowel movements per week, strain. In addition, five measurable digestive habits were included: fluid intake, fruit and vegetable consumption, sedentarism, stool consistency and meal order.

Statistical analysis performed included: Descriptive variables expressed as frequency and percentage.

Continuous variables are expressed as mean +/- standard deviation. Analyzed using SPSS version 20.

Results

169 tests were analyzed, of which 84 instances corresponded to

primary care physicians in October 2022 and 85 instances of patients having a consultation in May 2024. Inclusion criteria included: active primary care physicians at SEMERGEN national congress in October 2022 to the digestive health workshop and patients seen by primary care consultation. Tests that had incomplete data were excluded, which provides a total of final data of 116.

An age range (between 23 and 65 years) was selected for both groups. Average age in primary care physicians' group was 40.36+/-13.21 years, of which 74.1% were women. Meanwhile in patients' group, 55.3% were women and its average age was 39.4+/-12.6 years. Symptoms included: Slow digestion was presented in 28.6% of physicians and 27.1% in patients. Heartburn presented in 4.8%- 4.7%. Abdominal bloating in 40.5%-41.2%. Less than 3 bowel movements per week 13.1%-11.8%. Straining 21.4% -21.2%. Digestive habits: Intake of less than 1.5 liters of water 35.7% - 43.1%. Days when not eating fruit or vegetables 27.4% -28.2%. Sedentary lifestyle 34.5%-36.5%. Irregular Bowel movement 31%-32.9%. Disorganization in mealtimes 44%-44.7%.

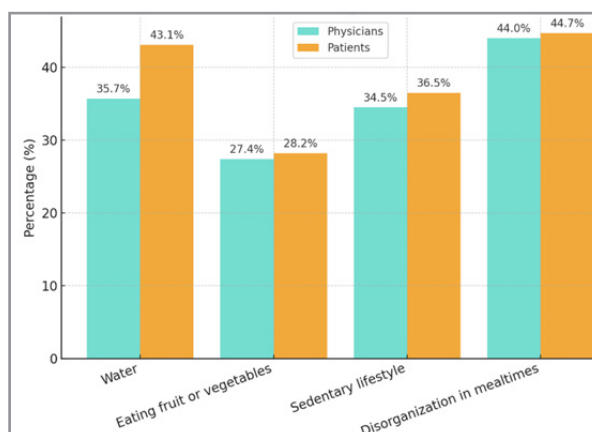


Figure 1: Digestive Habits

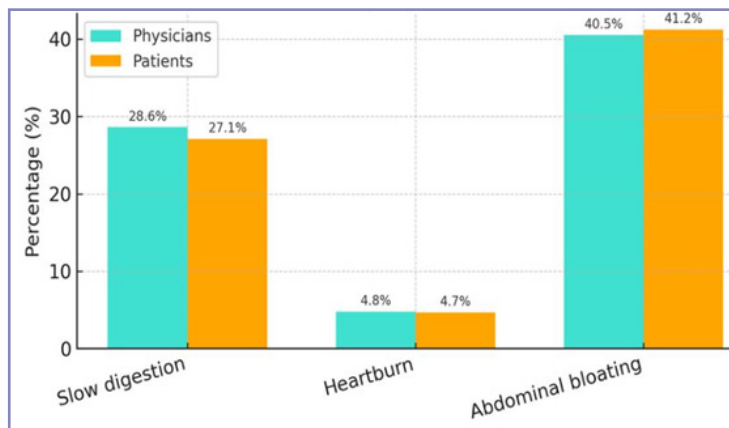


Figure 2: Symptoms.

Conclusions

As we can see, abdominal bloating is the most predominant symptom for both groups, followed by slow digestion. Lifestyle habits most frequently reported are low fluid intake and sedentarism with little physical exercise; these factors have a direct and significant impact on symptoms before mentioned.

Comparing the data obtained, it is remarkable how symptoms presentation is similar in both groups, which suggests a low ad-

herence to reported habits. Therefore, following a meal schedule, eating while sitting down, including fruits and vegetables on daily meals, practicing physical activity and managing stress should be the main therapeutic measures to incorporate when mild digestive disorders appear. As family doctors and general practitioners, in addition to being critical link to healthcare system, we must promote habits modification in order to improve our colleagues and patients' digestive health.