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Initial presentation of multiple sclerosis in Northern Iran: Is there any comparison to other countries?

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Introduction: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an inflammatory and neurodegenerative demyelinating disease of central nervous system (CNS). The aim of the present study was to determine the frequency of presenting symptoms in patients with MS to assess the factors associated with these symptoms.

Methods: Demographic and clinical features of 263 patients with clinically definite MS according to the McDonald criteria who had been admitted to a MS Center from 2001 to 2012 in Babol, northern Iran were reviewed. All the patients underwent a standard neurological examinations. Then, all the clinical findings and demographic variables such as marital status, age onset, education, place of live, disease duration and initiation pattern collected.

Results: A total of 263 consecutive MS patients with the age range of 17 to 61 yr were examined. Optic neuritis with the incidence of 46.8% followed by sensory disturbances were the most prevalent initiating symptoms. Significant difference was found between patients with or without optic neuritis and onset age of the disease ($p<0.001$); however in other variables there was not any significant difference.

Conclusion: Among the different manifestations optic neuritis was the most common initial symptoms in our study and monosymptomatic pattern was the most frequent pattern. Thus, practitioners/neurologists and ophthalmologists should be aware of this critical issue in this region.

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