Further Section

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Letter to the Editor

Neuroepidemiology 1985;4:59–60

Dear Editor,

I have just read with great interest the report by Prof. Demetris Vassilopoulos [Neuroepidemiology 3:1, 1984] entitled 'Epidemiological data for multiple sclerosis in Greece'. This paper is important because it is the first report, as far as I know, on the prevalence of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Greece, but I strongly suspect that the prevalence quoted of 10 per 100,000 is a gross underestimate.

Immigrants from Cyprus resident in Greater London have two thirds of the hospitalised prevalence of MS, 1960–72, as the UK-born, 36 expected at the UK rates and 23 were found, of whom 17 were Greek Cypriots and 6 were Turkish Cypriots [1]. A preliminary study with Dr. Lefcos Middleton, the neurologist in Cyprus, has already shown a much higher prevalence than 10 per 100,000 in the area studied which was around the town of Paphos. A pilot study in Lamia in mainland Greece by Dr. Agnes Pavlou has also shown a considerably higher prevalence than 10 per 100,000.

The earlier reports on the prevalence of MS in Italy were also very low, between 4 and 19 per 100,000 [2]. Recent studies, however, in three cities in Sicily. Enna, Agrigento and Monreale [3–5], have shown a MS prevalence of over 40 per 100,000, although in the neighbouring island of Malta, the prevalence is low at 4 per 100,000 [6]. This is evidence that there is a sudden, not a gradual fall, in MS prevalence in southern Europe.

I hope Prof. *Vassilopoulos* can be persuaded to undertake a survey of the prevalence of MS in one or two small Greek populations of, say, 30,000 people when I strongly suspect that the true prevalence of MS in Greece will be found to be very similar to that which has been found in Sicily.

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0251-5350/85/0041-0059\$2.75/0
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