

Marked Under-recognition of Restless Legs Symptoms in Primary Care: Evidence from 239,876 Routine Health Check-ups

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BACKGROUND

RLS prevalence is usually estimated between 2–10% using standardized questionnaires.

Routine care detects only a small fraction of expected RLS cases.

OBJECTIVE

Assess the frequency of spontaneously reported restless legs symptoms during routine health check-ups.

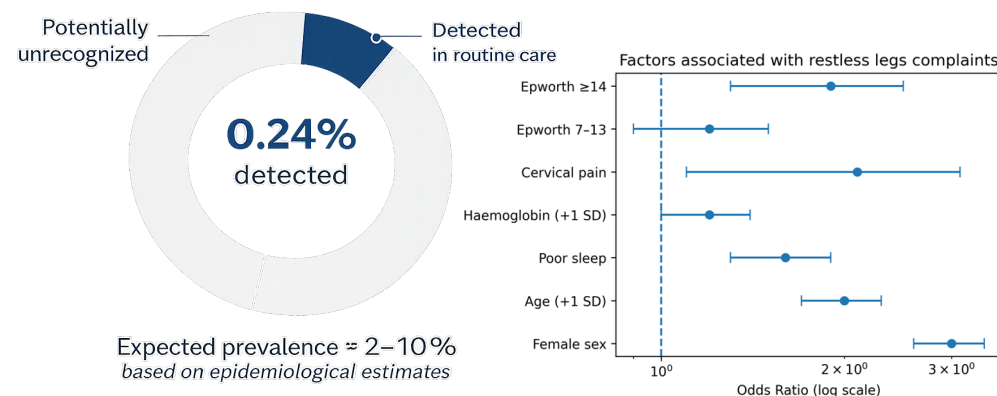
METHODS

Retrospective observational study.

239,876 adult examinations (2004–2022).

Multivariable logistic regression including sex, age, poor sleep, ESS score, haemoglobin and cervical pain.

0.24% detected prevalence vs expected 2–10%



MAIN RESULTS

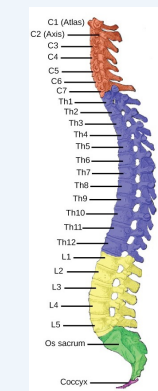
- 581 complaints among 239,876 examinations
- Female predominance (68.2%)
- Peak frequency: 35–65 years
- Strong association with cervical pain
- Higher ESS scores linked to increased risk

CLINICAL MESSAGE

Routine care detects only a small fraction of expected RLS cases.

CRANIO-CAUDAL GRADIENT

Association strongest for cervical pain, weaker for lower spinal levels.



Cervical OR : 2,1

Thoracic OR : 1,7

Lumbar : OR : 1,3 (NS)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY CARE

Targeted screening in patients with sleep complaints, chronic pain or excessive sleepiness.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Large gap between true prevalence and routine clinical detection.

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