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Symptomatic Diverticulosis Is Characterized By Loose Stools

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Background & Aims

Symptomatic uncomplicated diverticular disease is considered to be a discreet clinical entity distinct from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), but population-based data are unavailable. We aimed to investigate the prevalence and location of diverticulosis in the general population, and its association with colonic symptoms and mental health. We propose that individuals with diverticulosis would report more constipation and IBS.

Methods

We performed a population-based study of randomly selected adults born in Sweden (age, 18–70 y; 57.2% women); 745 received a gastroenterology consultation, completed validated abdominal symptom and mental health questionnaires, and were examined by colonoscopy. Logistic regression was used to calculate the associations between diverticulosis and age, sex, gastrointestinal symptoms, anxiety, depression, and self-rated health.

Results

Among the 742 participants (54.6% women), 130 (17.5%) had diverticulosis. Age was the strongest predictor of diverticulosis ($P < .001$), and diverticulosis was rare in participants younger than 40 years (0.7%). All

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participants with diverticulosis had sigmoid involvement. Participants with diverticulosis were more likely to report loose stools (odds ratio [OR], 1.88; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.20–2.96), urgency (OR, 1.64; 95% CI, 1.02–2.63), passing mucus (OR, 2.26; 95% CI, 1.08–4.72), and a high stool frequency (OR, 2.02; 95% CI, 1.11–3.65). Diverticulosis was associated with abdominal pain (OR, 2.10; 95% CI, 1.01–4.36; $P = .047$) and diarrhea-predominant IBS (OR, 9.55; 95% CI, 1.08–84.08; $P = .04$) in participants older than 60 years. The presence of anxiety and depression and self-rated health were similar in participants with and without diverticulosis.

Conclusions

The prevalence of diverticulosis is age-dependent. Diverticulosis is associated with diarrhea in subjects across all age ranges. In subjects older than age 60, diverticulosis is associated with abdominal pain and diarrhea-predominant IBS.

Keywords:

[Diverticulosis](#), [Colonoscopy](#), [Population-Based](#), [Irritable Bowel Syndrome \(IBS\)](#), [Symptomatic Uncomplicated Diverticular Disease \(SUDD\)](#)

Abbreviations used in this paper:

[ASQ](#) ([Abdominal Symptom Questionnaire](#)), [GI](#) ([gastrointestinal](#)), [HADS](#) ([Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale](#)), [IBS](#) ([irritable bowel syndrome](#)), [OR](#) ([odds ratio](#)), [SUDD](#) ([symptomatic uncomplicated diverticular disease](#))

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