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Summary

THE PREVALENCE OF COELIAC DISEASE IN RANDOM ASYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS USING A POINT-OF-CARE TEST

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A point-of-care screening study in the Maltese Islands found a 0.56% prevalence of biopsy-confirmed coeliac disease in asymptomatic adults aged 18-75 years.

KEY POINTS

- 1251 asymptomatic adults were screened using the Biocard Celiac Test, a rapid fingertip test detecting anti-tissue transglutaminase IgA antibodies.
- Nine patients (0.7%) tested positive on point-of-care testing; of eight who proceeded to confirmatory testing, seven (87.5%) were confirmed to have coeliac disease on duodenal biopsy.
- All seven confirmed cases had TTG IgA levels greater than 10 times the upper limit of normal and strongly positive EMA; one patient with TTG IgA less than three times the upper limit had normal biopsies despite weakly positive serology.
- The authors conclude that duodenal biopsies remain necessary in patients with TTG IgA levels below 10 times the upper limit of normal, and note the unresolved question of how to follow patients with positive serology below this threshold and normal biopsies.

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