

TOWARDS A NATIONAL SCREENING PROGRAM FOR COELIAC DISEASE AND TYPE 1 DIABETES: AN ITALIAN FEASIBILITY PILOT PROJECT (D1CE SCREEN)

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The D1Ce Screen pilot study demonstrates the feasibility of nationwide pediatric screening for celiac disease and type 1 diabetes in Italy, enrolling 5,534 children across four regions with 75.7% primary care pediatrician completion and 89% adequate sample collection.

KEY POINTS

- The study screened children at three target ages (2, 6, and 10 years) in Lombardy, Marche, Campania, and Sardinia, exceeding the planned enrollment of 5,363 children with 5,534 participants, 91.1% within target age range.
- For celiac disease screening, 2.8% tested positive for transglutaminase IgA with an additional 1.8% borderline; for type 1 diabetes, 0.3% had one autoantibody and 0.2% had two or more autoantibodies, with all positive children referred for clinical confirmation.
- Sample collection by primary care pediatricians using fingerprick capillary blood was feasible, with 89% of samples adequate for at least one assay and 96% of dried blood spots suitable for HLA typing.
- Psychological assessment using validated questionnaires showed a reduction in anxiety and depression symptoms over time, with families reporting less discomfort, indicating the screening does not negatively impact psychological well-being.
- The pilot provides evidence supporting scalability of the screening program within the Italian National Health Service framework, with key success factors including high family participation, strong pediatrician involvement, and reliable capillary blood sampling.
- Early detection aims to prevent diabetic ketoacidosis in type 1 diabetes and long-term complications in celiac disease through timely gluten-free diet initiation.

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