

Fatigue in Swedish patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Jäghult S., Pihl Lesnovska K., and Marsal J.



Conclusion

This study shows that fatigue is common among IBD-patients in Sweden and that they suffer from fatigue to a similar extent as patients in other countries. Those with highest perceived fatigue are women and patients with active disease.

To date, no studies have examined the prevalence of fatigue among Swedish IBD-patients nor the impact of fatigue on their lives. There is thus a pressing need to explore the extent of fatigue in this population and to understand patients' experiences and the effects of fatigue on their daily lives. We therefore aim to expand the study to address these issues more comprehensively.

Background

Fatigue is defined as an overwhelming sense of tiredness, weakness, or exhaustion, which can be physical, psychological, or a combination of both. Fatigue is a common symptom of IBD and a significant concern for patients with IBD. International studies have shown that between 44-86% of patients with active disease, and 22-41% of those in remission, experience fatigue. This symptom limits patients in their everyday activities and negatively impacts HRQOL. Despite its profound effects on patients, fatigue is often overlooked by healthcare professionals, who find fatigue to be challenging to measure and to manage.

Aim

The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of fatigue among Swedish IBD-patients, in active disease and in remission, respectively.

Method

The study was conducted using a disease-specific questionnaire, the IBD-Fatigue Scale (IBD-F), which has been translated and validated into Swedish. The IBD-F was electronically distributed to IBD-patients in Stockholm and Linköping. In addition, demographic data including gender, age, diagnosis, disease activity, medical treatment, and marital status were collected. The IBD-F consists of three sections. Section I assesses the frequency and severity of fatigue. The total score ranges from 0-20, where 0 equals no fatigue and 20 reflects severe fatigue. Section II addresses the impact of fatigue on quality of life; and Section III collects patients' comments related to fatigue. Results presented here comprise data from Section I.

Results

A total of 760 (34%) patients accepted to participate in the study and of those, 674 completed the questionnaire. Demographic data are presented in Table 1. Results from the first section of IBD-F show that fatigue is a burdensome symptom among IBD patients in Sweden (Figure 1). The mean value was 12.1. Comparisons between genders, diagnoses, and degrees of disease activity, showed that the patients who perceived most fatigue were woman and those with active disease and/or continuous symptoms (Table 2).

Table 1. Demographic data (n=674)

Diagnosis, % CD/UC/IBD-U	37/60/3
Gender, % Female/Male/Other	53/47/0,1
Age Mean (range)	59 (22-88)
Marital status, % Married or partner/single	70/30
Status of IBD, % Active disease/Remission/Continuous symptoms	6/80/14
Extraintestinal manifestations, % Yes/No	60/40
Wellbeing, % Very good/Pretty good/Bad/Very bad/Terrible	14/71/12/3/0
Medical treatment, % None/5-ASA/Immunomodulators/Biologics/Corticosteroids	25/32/12/29/2

Figure 1. The results show the distribution of levels of fatigue in Section I of the IBD-Fatigue Scale. N=674.

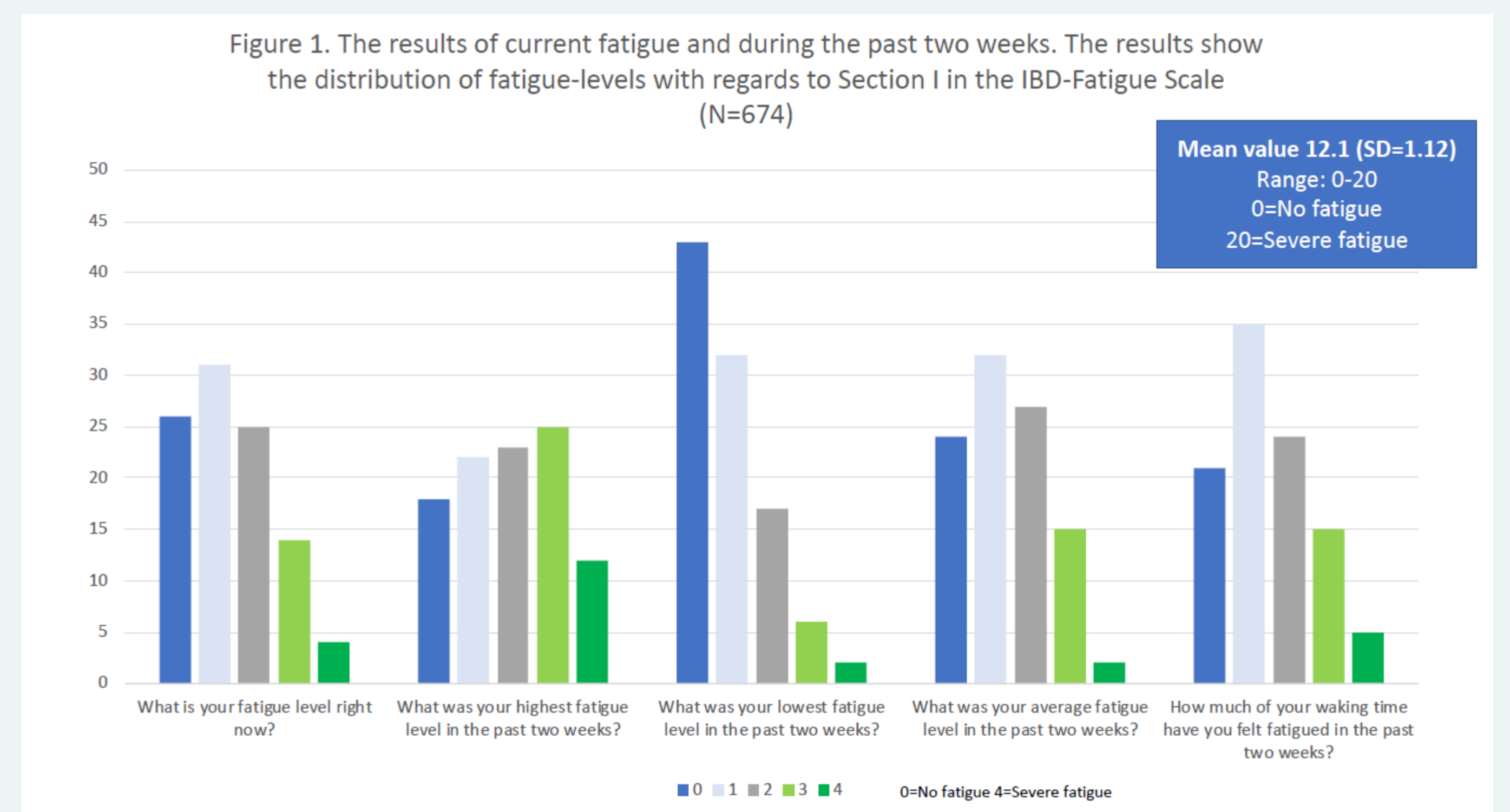


Table 2. Comparisons between various IBD-patient subgroups regarding IBD-Fatigue Scale Section 1 data. Score range 0-20, where 0 represents no fatigue and 20 represents severe fatigue.

PATIENT GROUPS	MEAN SCORES
Gender Female/male	13.2/10.9 (p<0.05)
Diagnosis CD/UC/IBD-U	12.2/12.0/12.2 NS
Disease activity Active disease/Remission/ Continuous symptoms	13.6/11.4/15.9 (p<0.05)