

## Short communication

# Is the incidence of Balkan endemic nephropathy decreasing?

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## Summary

Balkan Endemic Nephropathy (BEN) is a non-inflammatory, slowly progressing, familial, primarily tubulo-interstitial, bilateral renal disease that affects rural populations in several Balkan countries. Our study describes a time trend of the incidence of BEN in eight villages of Vratza District, Bulgaria, for the period 1965–1987, based on three various data sets. The data suggest that after the initial peak between 1967 and 1970, the incidence remained quite stable for the period 1970–1984, and declined after 1984. However, the study also demonstrates under-recording of BEN cases and less complete case identification, especially after 1979. Migration of population might also have contributed to an apparent decline in registered cases. We detected cases of BEN in villages that previously were BEN-free. We recommended a rigorous monitoring of BEN in all afflicted countries, before concluding that the incidence of BEN is decreasing. © 2002 Éditions scientifiques et médicales Elsevier SAS

## Balkan / epidemiology / nephropathy

## Résumé – Y a-t-il diminution de l'incidence de la néphropathie endémique des Balkans ?

La néphropathie endémique des Balkans (Balkan Endemic Nephropathy; BEN) est une maladie rénale, affectant des populations rurales dans quelques régions de Balkans. Notre étude décrit la tendance de l'incidence de BEN dans le temps dans huit villages en zone de Vratza, Bulgarie, pour la période 1965–1987, utilisant trois bases de données différentes. Les données suggèrent qu'après une apogée entre 1967 et 1970, l'incidence reste assez stable pour la période 1970–1984, et diminue après 1984. Cependant, l'étude démontre aussi le sous-enregistrement des cas de BEN et une identification moins complète, particulièrement après 1979. La migration de la population pourrait également contribuer à un déclin apparent des cas enregistrés. Nous avons détecté des cas de BEN dans des villages qui en étaient dépourvus précédemment. Nous recommandons une surveillance stricte du BEN dans tous les pays touchés par la maladie, avant de conclure que son incidence diminue. © 2002 Éditions scientifiques et médicales Elsevier SAS

## épidémiologie / néphropathie des Balkans

For over five decades, the occurrence of Balkan endemic nephropathy (BEN) has been characterized by insufficient evidence of its causes. BEN is a non-inflammatory, slowly progressing, familial, primarily tubulo-interstitial, bilateral renal disease, usually without hypertension, that

affects rural populations in several regions in Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia [1–3]. Despite investigations into the role of many environmental, genetic, and immune factors, no definitive risk factors have yet been identified. Nevertheless, there

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# The Balkan Nephropathy In Honour Of Professor Dr Frano Builic

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### **The Balkan Nephropathy In Honour Of Professor Dr Frano Bulic Introduction**

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