



## Prevalence of Barrett's esophagus in Lebanon

To the Editor,

We read the article by Masri et al. (1) with great interest. The authors have investigated the prevalence of Barrett's esophagus (BE) in a tertiary care center in Lebanon and compared their findings with regional and global data. They found that the prevalence of BE in Lebanon is much lower than that in western countries, and they concluded that the reasons for this East-West divide are unknown and require further investigation (1). We agree with the authors that the prevalence of BE is lower in the eastern countries than in the western countries based on the previously published data (2). The causes for this regional difference are also the subject of their study. Two main reasons have been suggested as the causes for this difference. Firstly, racial genetic factors may play a role in this variance (3). Secondly, the prevalence of various etiologic factors related to BE, such as alcohol intake, smoking, high-fat diet, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and elderly population, may lead to the differences in the prevalence of BE in different regions (4). Masri et al. (1) have also mentioned these possible factors, and they have analyzed the prevalence of some of these factors (GERD, alcohol intake, *Helicobacter pylori*, and smoking) in patients diagnosed with BE. Although the authors have only aimed to investigate the prevalence of BE, it should be better to analyze the prevalence of these risk factors in all populations of the study for determining the cause for lower prevalence in Lebanon. We speculate whether the prevalence of GERD, alcohol intake, and elderly people, which was lower in their study group, correlated with the low prevalence of BE in the western countries. If these factors were similar to those of the western countries, racial genetic differences may have an evident role in the prevalence of BE.

Impact of racial characteristics on the prevalence of diseases cannot be ignored. However, evaluation of the known risk factors in all study groups facilitates the determination of the real effects of the suspected factors.

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