

Letter to the Editor

Dear Professor Alberti,
Vague and his colleagues [1] in Marseille recently reported an increased prevalence of the Lewis negative blood group in 170 diabetics – 29% in diabetics compared to 10% in normal controls. This difference was true for both insulin dependent and non-insulin dependent types of diabetes, a surprising finding since the two types are genetically distinct [2, 3].

We are engaged in a long term study of diabetes in identical twins and in the course of it we have blood grouped the twins to establish their identity (performed by the M. R. C. Blood Group Reference Laboratory). We have results in 115 pairs of twins: Lewis negative phenotype was found in 4 of 86 insulin dependent diabetics (5%) and in 1 of 29 non-insulin dependent diabetics (3%). These results correspond to the prevalence in the normal population (6%).

Thus our results do not confirm those of Vague et al. The frequency of the Lewis negative phenotype varies in different ethnic groups but Vague et al. found an excess in all their subjects – French, Mediterranean and North African. We are unable to explain why our results differ from theirs.

Yours faithfully,

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References

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2. Tattersall, R. B., Pyke, D. A.: Diabetes in identical twins. *Lancet* **1972 II**, 1120–1125
3. Cudworth, A. G., Woodrow, J. C.: Evidence for HLA-linked genes in “juvenile” diabetes mellitus. *Br. Med. J.* **1975 III**, 133–135

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