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Shifting patterns in new Behçet's patients: two snapshots five years apart

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Introduction

Over the past five years, the UK has experienced the effects of significant events including the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, various global conflicts, and economic recession. These include increasing migration, economic inactivity, and demand for mental health services. The potential impact of these national changes on the demographics, social background and disease severity of new patients attending a Behçet's Syndrome (BS) tertiary centre in East London was assessed.

Methods

Convenience samples of 80 patients newly diagnosed with BS at the London Behçet's Centre of Excellence between May 2023-24 and May 2018-19 were taken. Retrospective record analysis was carried out. Separately, oral ulcer severity score (OUSS) and arthritis pain score at first assessment were also recorded from a sample of new patients each year from 2018-2023. Data was analysed in Excel, with the Z-test for two proportions used to analyse difference between groups.
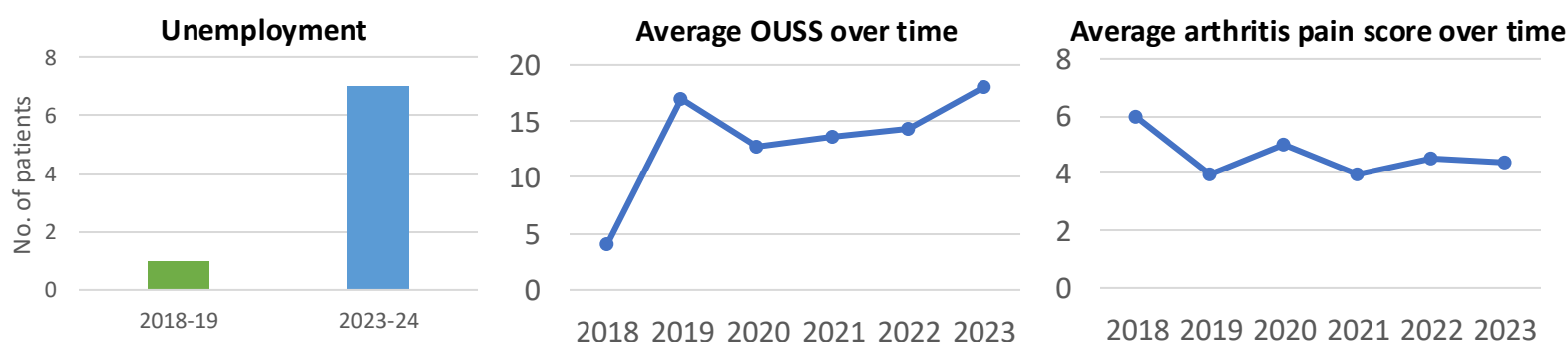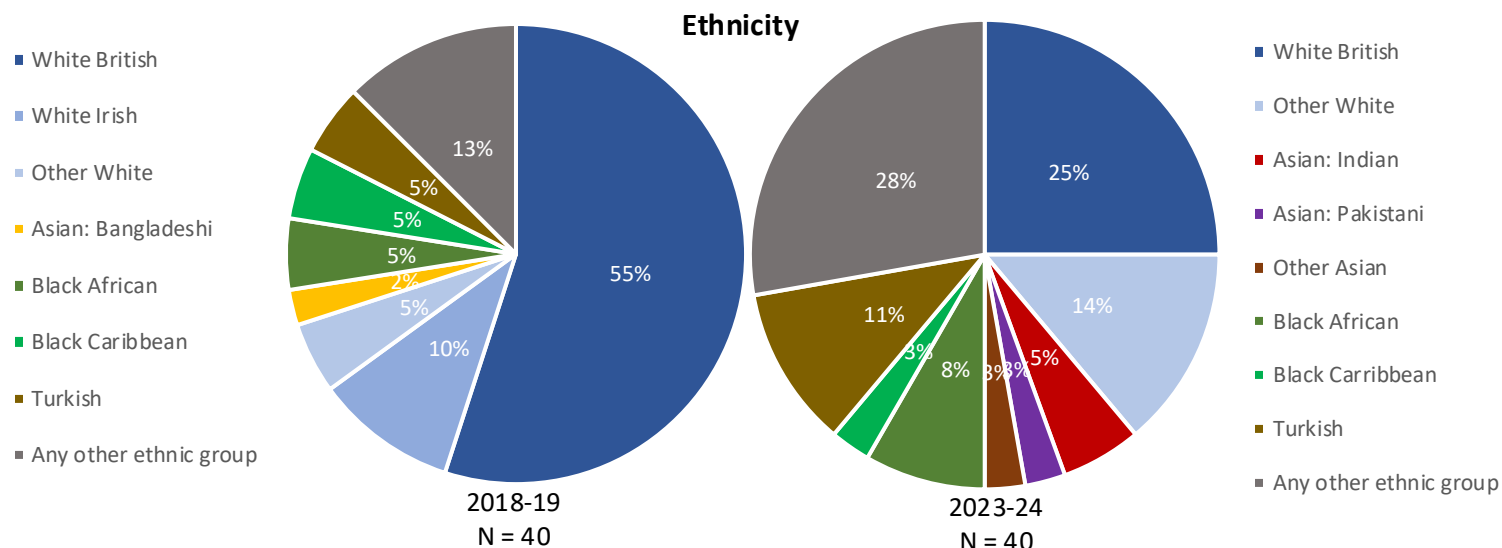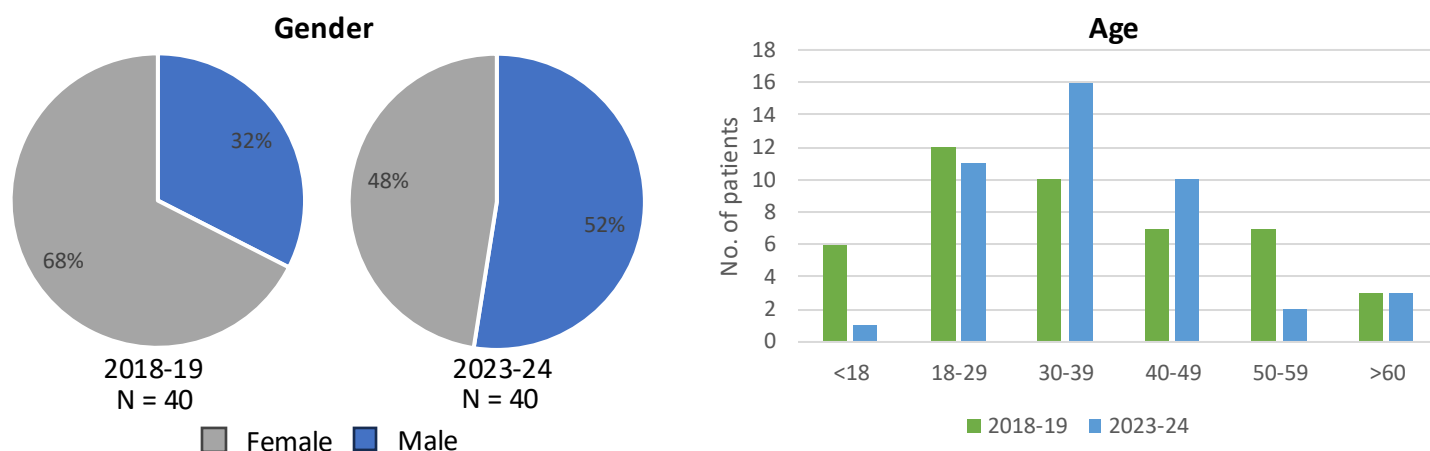
Results

A greater proportion of new BS patients were male in 2023-24 compared to 2018-19, although this was non-significant (52% vs. 32%, z=-1.81, p=0.0703).

There were no significant changes overall in the age of new patients.

Significantly fewer new BS patients identified as White British in 2023-24 compared to 2018-19 (25% n=9 vs. 55% n=22 z= -2.98, p= 0.003). Conversely, more patients identified as Black or Asian in 2023-24.

More working-age patients reported unemployment in 2023-24, although this was non-significant (23% vs. 6%, z= 1.50, p= 0.13).

An increasing trend in OUSS was seen between 2018-2023. Arthritis pain score remained similar over this time.

Conclusion

The ethnicity of new BS patients referred to London may be changing over time, however further work with larger sample sizes over a longer period of time is required. Clinicians should be mindful of the possible changing needs of BS patients to provide holistic care.

References

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