How does oligo- en asymptomatic non-tropical sprue present itself?

R Maire, Christa Meyenberger, J Altorfer, R Ammann, R Flury, Peter Greminger & W Vetter

According to the computerized ICD registration, 20 new cases of non-tropical sprue were detected in our outpatient clinic between 1979 and 1990. 8 of these patients had an oligo- or asymptomatic form of this disease (40%). The clinical presentation and spectrum of abnormal laboratory findings in these 8 cases are described in detail. It is concluded that laboratory parameters indicating malabsorption, especially hematologic changes, are helpful for the detection of the oligo- and asymptomatic form of non-tropical sprue, and that, in cases with undetermined anemia, this form of sprue must be considered in etiologic differential diagnosis. Finally, it seems advisable to perform a biopsy as a routine procedure during endoscopy in cases with unclear anemia.