Prevalence of the metabolic syndrome and its components among obese men and women in Italy.

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Objective*:* Assessment of the prevalence of the metabolic syndrome (MetS) and its components in Italian obese individuals.

Methods*:* Cross-sectional estimate of MetS prevalence using the IDF definition in 635 obese (BMI ≥ 35 kg/m^2) individuals (286 men, 349 women) aged 19–78 years hospitalised for mass excess treatment.

Results*:* MetS prevalence was significantly (p<0.001) higher in males (75.9%) than in females (61.9%), due to the increased prevalence of 4/5 involved abnormalities. A multivariate binary logistic regression analysis disclosed a contributory independent effect of ageing (p<0.01-0.001), but not of BMI, whereas large waist circumference (p<0.01) and high waist-to-hip ratio (p<0.01) contributed to MetS prevalence only in women. Affected individuals were significantly older (males p=0.022; females p<0.001), affected men being younger than affected women (p<0.01). The prevailing clinical picture included all abnormalities (21.2% in men, 22.2% in women); in minimal trait MetS (3/5 abnormalities), the prevailing combination was, beside central obesity, hypertension- hyperglycaemia in men (12.4%), and hypertension-dyslipidemia in women (19.4%).

Conclusions*:* MetS is a highly prevalent condition among Italian obese individuals. Prevalence and combinations of involved abnormalities differ considerably between genders and suggest a different pathophysiology of the MetS in men and women, with possible relevance for prevention and treatment of the condition.