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Title: Demographic and epidemiological characteristics of children with tuberculosis at hospital for lung diseases "St. Sofia", Sofia, Bulgaria, for the period 2007-2011

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Body: A retrospective study of the children and adolescents aged 0 to 18 years admitted for diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis (TB) to University Clinic for Pediatric Respiratory Diseases at Hospital for Lung Diseases "St. Sofia", Sofia, Bulgaria, from 2007 to 2011 was performed. Our aim was to describe the demographic and epidemiological characteristics of the children with TB for the above mentioned period. Methods: Data were obtained from the medical records at the clinic and from the National Tuberculosis Registry Database. Results: A total of 945 children were enrolled. The Male:Female ratio was 1.2:1. The mean age was 9.3 years (range: 0-18). There were 43 infants under 1 year (4.6%), 181 children (19.2%) in age group 1-4 years, 213 (22.5%) – in age group 5-9 years, 316 (33.4%) – in age group 10-14 years, and 192 (20.3%) – over 15 years. The children originated from all over the country, with higher numbers from the larger conurbations in the capital Sofia city, Plovdiv and Varna, and from the districts with higher than the average TB incidence for Bulgaria (Kyustendil, Vratsa, Vidin). Two hundred and twenty children lived in rural areas (23.3%). Out of all cases, 371 (39.3%) had a history about contact with patient with active TB; 806 children (85.3%) were diagnosed with active TB disease and 139 (14.7%) – with latent TB infection (LTBI). Conclusions: Most of the children with TB belong to older age groups and live in urban settings. Further activities are needed to find the children in close contact with adult index TB cases and to prevent the progression of LTBI to active TB in children at risk.