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Title: More than 50% of patients visit a general practitioner (GP), general physician (Gen P) or a pediatrician (P) in India for respiratory symptoms: Results of a one-day point-prevalence study in 2,04,912 patients across 22 states and 5 union territories in India

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Body: A better understanding of the disease pattern and symptoms for which a patient visits a doctor will help design appropriate health care management strategies. This study was aimed to investigate the symptoms for which a patient visits a general healthcare provider in India using a 1-day point-prevalence cross-sectional study design. Method: 13,225 practicing GPs, Gen Ps and Ps, randomly selected from 880 cities and towns in India based on a proportionate random sampling strategy were invited to participate in this study. On 1st February 2011, all participating doctors completed a questionnaire based on the validated ICD-10 classification, wherein they captured age, gender and symptoms of all patients who visited their clinic. Data was collected, cleaned and entered in Epi Info software and simple descriptive analysis was performed. Results: A total of 2,04,912 patients visited 7400 doctors who consented and gave clean data. Amongst these, 50.6% presented with respiratory symptoms (31.8% cough, 15.8% rhinitis, 9.4% sore throat, 8.4% wheeze and 6.9% breathlessness), 25% presented with gastrointestinal symptoms, 18% cardiovascular, 5% dermatology and 3% for endocrine related symptoms/diagnosis. These observations were generally uniform across 22 states and 5 union territories in India with no hot spot regions. Conclusion: Respiratory symptoms account for over 50% of symptoms for which a patient visits a doctor in India, which extrapolates to at least 20 million patient visits for respiratory symptoms every day in India.