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Title: Hospitalizations for asthma in Portugal from 2000 to 2008: Different trends in different regions

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Body: Objectives: To study regional differences and time trends of hospitalizations due to asthma in Portugal between 2000 and 2008. Material and methods: Retrospective study of hospitalizations for asthma (inpatient records only), for all ages, in acute care hospitals of the national healthcare system (N=85) in mainland Portugal, between 2000 and 2008. Analysis per region (North, Centre, Lisbon, Alentejo and Algarve) of all discharges that included asthma as the principal diagnosis, identified using ICD-9-CM (codes 493.xx). Results: 28,707 patients were hospitalized due to asthma (0.3% of total admissions in the same period). Globally, the rate of hospitalizations for asthma per 100 000 inhabitants decreased from 35.3 in 2000 to 27.8 in 2008. In children (age<18 years) the rate decreased from 93.4 in 2000 to 67.5 per 100 000 in 2008, with the exception of 2 regions: Algarve increased from 40.2 to 82.4 and Alentejo from 50.1 to 69.7 per 100 000. In adults, the reduction was less pronounced over the years: from 21.2 in 2000 to 18.9 per 100 000 in 2008. All regions, except the Algarve, had a decrease. In this region a steep increase was observed in hospitalizations: from 15.9 in 2000 to 40.1 in 2008 per 100.000 adults. Conclusions: Overall, the rate of hospitalizations for asthma is decreasing over years (with a global decrease of 7.5 per 100.000 inhabitants in the 9 years). Further analysis should be performed in order to understand why the Algarve had such a steep increase while the other regions had decreases.