

European Respiratory Society Annual Congress 2013

Abstract Number: 3356

Publication Number: P2410

Abstract Group: 1.6. General Practice and Primary Care

Keyword 1: Primary care **Keyword 2:** Public health **Keyword 3:** Education

Title: The lack of awareness by general practitioners in diagnosing acute and chronic respiratory conditions in a low-income setting

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Body: In spite of the epidemiologic magnitude of respiratory diseases worldwide the literature is scarce regarding the diagnostic ability of acute and chronic respiratory condition by general practitioners (GPs). The objective of this study was to verify the agreement between GPs and pulmonologists in diagnosing acute respiratory illnesses (ARI), tuberculosis (TB), chronic obstructive respiratory disease (COPD) and asthma. A cross sectional study was undertaken in three cities in the surroundings of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. We invited both, GPs and patients older than 15 years presenting at least one of the following symptoms: cough, breathlessness and/or wheezing who looked for medical assistance at the primary care facilities. The clinical history, the physical examination and the diagnosis of above cited clinical conditions were recorded into the standardized documentation form in order to independently compare the diagnosis made for GPs and pulmonologists. Subsidiary tests were not used. Sixty GPs and 554 patients were included. 235 (42.4%) had ARI, 123 (17.3%) asthma, 87 (15.7%) COPD and 69 (12.4%) were TB-suspected. Kappa values were 0.450 for ARI (95%CI 0.381;0.519), 0.426 for TB (95%CI 0.358;0.494), 0.432 for asthma (95%CI 0.325;0.539) and 0.548 for COPD (95%CI 0.461;0.635). A moderate agreement between GPs and pulmonologists in the diagnosis of the most prevalent respiratory conditions was found. This result emphasizes the need to adopt some measures in order to improve the ability of GPs in diagnosing of respiratory conditions in this context.