

Short-term health service utilization after a paediatric injury: a population-based study.

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BACKGROUND: The aim of the study is to identify which types of injuries are responsible for a major component of the health burden in a population-based children cohort in North-Eastern Italy.

METHODS: All children (1-13 years) residing in Veneto region, who were hospitalized in 2008 with a International Classification of Diseases, ninth edition, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM) code for injury in the first diagnostic field were considered. The outcome was defined as the difference in hospital use in the 12 months following the injury and it was compared to the year preceding the injury occurrence. We computed hospitalization rates by gender, age class and injury type.

RESULTS: Hospitalization rates for injury are highest in males, especially among school-aged children. Rates for intracranial injury exhibit a more pronounced decline with age in females, whereas a more marked rise in upper limb fracture rates among school-aged males is observed. Overall, 3 days of hospital stay per child are attributable to injury. Burns, skull fracture and a high injury severity are associated with a greater number of additional inpatient days.

CONCLUSIONS: The impact of specific injury types on health services utilization varies with gender, age and severity. These observed patterns contribute to build a clearer picture of this leading global public health problem and deserve more attention in planning preventive strategies and resource allocation.

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