

ABSTRACT

Acute respiratory infections (ARI) are one of the commonest causes of death in children in developing countries. They are responsible for four of the estimated 13 million deaths that occur in children under 5 years of age each year; two-thirds of these deaths are in infants, especially young infants. Lung puncture studies in developing countries indicate that most cases of severe pneumonia in children are caused by bacteria, usually streptococcus Pneumoniae or Haemophilus influenza. This contrasts with the situation in developed countries where the great majority are due to viruses.

This study on the occurrence and treatment of ARIs at the Bustamante Hospital for Children (BHC) was conducted between January and May 1993. The study periods were September - November 1991 and September - November 1992. The study found that ARIs accounted for 7,353 consultations or 26.86 percent total case load of 27,360.

Pneumonia emerged as the leading ARI accounting for 2,299 consultations or 31.28 percent.

Incidence of ARI was found to be highest in the < 1 year age group. This accounted for 3,014 visits or 41.01 percent. This was followed by the 1-2 years age group with 2,684 cases or 36.52 percent.

The association between age and the occurrence of ARIs was found to be statistically significant.

There was an observed difference of 948 between males and females. This difference was not found to be statistically significant.

The incidence of ARI was found to be highest in low socio-economic and highly industrialized areas with poor housing and high levels of air pollution.

Approximately 25 percent of ARI cases also presented with risk factors of Gastro-Enteritis and Malnutrition. Most of these cases were also from the lower socio-economic areas.

The Case Fatality Rate for pneumonia was found to be below WHO estimates for developing countries.

The prevalence of ARI was slightly below WHO estimates for developing countries.

A questionnaire to test the knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of nurses and doctors at BHC re the WHO Case Management Strategy for the control of Acute Respiratory Infections. There were 20 respondents. The scores were found to be positive towards the case management strategy.

Based on the conclusions of the study, several recommendations were made including the adoption of the WHO case management strategy and its integration into the primary health care system with training and inputs from selected secondary health care personnel.