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Demographic and Health Characteristics of Elderly Population in Three Geographical Areas of the Split-Dalmatian County in Croatia

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Aim. To analyze demographic and health characteristics of the population aged ≥ 65 years from three geographical areas of the Split-Dalmatian County (islands, coastal and inland area) differing in their demographic, social and health characteristics.

Methods. The methods of descriptive epidemiology and descriptive statistics were used to analyze data obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics and patient hospitalization records from the Public Health Institute of the Split-Dalmatian County.

Results. According to the duration of hospital treatment, 42.1% of the elderly patients were hospitalized for 7-14 days, 24.5% for 15-28 days, 19.3% for 2-6 days, 8.4% for ≥ 28 days, and 5.8% for only one day. The lowest discharge rate was recorded for the island area (689 discharges per 10,000 population aged ≥ 65). Comparison of the island area with the coastal and inland area yielded a statistically significant difference (chi-square $MAF=114.43$; $p<0.01$).

Conclusions. High proportion of elderly patients hospitalized for more than 14 days and the leading causes of treatment recorded in this population point to the need for special geriatric facilities. The lowest rate of hospital admission in elderly islanders indicates the need for dislocated stationary geriatric units in the area.

Key words: *aging; hospital; morbidity; mortality*

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