

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Croatian islanders report good physical health, poor social functioning**

ZAGREB – People on two Croatian islands rated their physical functioning and vitality better than average of Croatian population, showed a new study published in the thematic issue of the Croatian Medical Journal. On the other hand, islanders did not feel their social functioning is very well.

The study was conducted during 2002 and 2003 and included 600 randomly selected inhabitants from 6 villages on the islands of Rab and Vis. Mean age of participants was 55 years. Researchers from the Andrija Štampar School of Public Health explored the health-related quality of life of islanders by a questionnaire for self-assessment of different aspects of health.

Compared with the national average, islanders less frequently felt that poor health limits them in physical activities; they felt more vital and suffered less from bodily pain. Such results can be explained in two ways: it is known that the “Mediterranean” type of diet and favorable climate can have a positive impact on the health of people. However, it is also possible that the observed result is due to a kind of natural selection: people with bad health leave the island earlier in life in search of specialized health service, while physically stronger stay on the island till their old age.

Islanders rated their social functioning worse than Croatian average. This could be the result of their geographical and social isolation. “Geographically isolated populations are dependent on transportation via air and water, which limits their social functioning, such as meeting new people and getting involved in different social activities”, write the authors of the study.

Authors point out that comprehensive account of population health status requires not only subjective, but also objective measures. Still, the results of subjective self-assessment obtained in this study can be useful for better understanding of conditions of life and health-related quality of life of isolated island populations.

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