

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Increasing number of alcohol-intoxicated children in Split-Dalmatia County**

In the last decade, an increasing number of alcohol-intoxicated children has been treated in University Hospital Split, shows a study published in the new issue of the Croatian Medical Journal.

From 1997 to 2007, 594 children aged 0-18 were hospitalized in Split due to various intoxications. Out of these cases, 239 (40%) was due to alcohol consumption. Most of the patients were in the 14-18 age group, and in 71% of the cases the intoxicated patients were boys. The study showed that the number of children hospitalized due to alcohol intoxication increased from 7 in 1997 to 59 in 2007. The proportion of alcohol intoxications among all cases of intoxications also increased in the same period – from 17 to 66%.

More than a half of children intoxicated with alcohol was hospitalized during weekends – either on Saturday or on Sunday. Almost 80% of intoxications took place outside of the child's home, mostly in the night clubs and cafes, but also on the beach and in the park, playground, stadium or stations.

Besides alcohol, medical drugs were also a common source of intoxications in children – almost 37% of hospitalizations were due to these substances. Further 16% of hospitalizations were due to chemicals such as acids, alkali, dyes and varnishes, detergents and dilutors.

The authors point out that the data from their research could be representative for the whole Split-Dalmatia County, as their hospital receives patients from the wider region, with approximately 300 thousand inhabitants. They conclude that one of the reasons for the observed increase in the number of alcohol intoxications may be “liberalization in education and upbringing, which have led to children spending increasingly more time outside their homes without parental supervision“.

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