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GENERAL, EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PARAMETERS AND IMMUNIZATION COVERAGE OF CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM MORBILLI IN CENTRAL KOSOVO AND METOHIJA

Vanja Ničković[1], Aleksandar Ranković[2,5], Ljiljana Šulović[3], Snežana Danić-Filipović[3], Snežana Marković-Jovanović[3], Zorica Vujnović-Živković[3], Jadranka Mitić[3], Hristina Kocić[4], Ilija Kocić[5], Marko Ristić[6]

[1]Clinical-Hospital Center, Priština, Gračanica, Serbia
[2]Clinic of Infective desease Niš, Serbia
[3]University of Priština, Faculty of Medicine, Kosovska Mitrovica, Serbia
[4]Clinical-Hospital Center, Niš, Serbia
[5]University of Niš, Faculty of Medicine, Niš, Serbia
[6]PhD Student, University of Niš, Faculty of Medicine, Niš, Serbia

Contact: Vanja Ničković
77/9 Nemanjića Blvd., 18000 Niš, Serbia
E-mail: vanja.nickovic@gmail.com

Morbilli is a viral, highly contagious droplet infection belonging to the group of rashcausing fever. The virus enters humans via the respiratory route. The disease starts with a rise in body temperature, "facies morbillosa" cough, catarrhal changes of the mucous membrane of the upper respiratory tract followed by maculopapular rash.

The aim of the paper was to analyze epidemiological parameters and the vaccination status of affected children in central Kosovo and Metohija enclaves.

The study enrolled 91 children (57.1% boys and 42.9% girls), in the period October 2017-March 2018 in the enclaves where Serbs, Roma, Albanians, Gorani, and Turks live. The diagnosis was established according to epidemiological and clinical parameters, blood count, and findings of specific IgM antibodies. The children were grouped according to gender, ethnicity, age, the origin of the infection, and vaccination status. Numerical properties and attributes are shown. The Student's t-test was used for comparing sets of presented numerical values. The Chi squared (χ^2) test and Fisher's exact test were used to illustrate and compare the difference in the frequency of attributive characteristics.

The mean age of children was 9.74 ± 4.23 years. The greatest number of patients was in December, 34.1%. The majority of children were of Roma ethnicity. The number of affected unvaccinated Roma children (49.4%) was three times higher in comparison to Serbian children (17.6%) and five times higher in comparison to children of Albanian ethnicity (9.9%), which is a statistically significant difference (χ^2: $p < 0.05$). A great number of children (30.7%) got infected in healthcare facilities. The majority of children who received one dose of vaccine were among Serbian children (16.5%). The number of children with nosocomial infections (30.7%) was 6 times higher in comparison to children with unknown source of infection (5.5%) (χ^2: $p < 0.05$).

In the enclaves of central Kosovo and Metohija, the majority of Roma children were affected because of non-vaccination, inadequate living conditions and migrations. The incidence of nosocomial infections indicates that the morbillivirus spreads rapidly. Morbilli can be eradicated by conducting healthcare education and complete immunization, primarily of Roma children.

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