

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOSPITALIZED MEASLES AFFECTED CHILDREN DURING THE 2017-2018 EPIDEMIC IN THE JABLANICA DISTRICT

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Despite the availability of safe, effective and inexpensive vaccine since the 1960s, in 2018, more than 140.000 people worldwide died from measles. The aim of this study was to determine socio-epidemiological and clinical characteristics among hospitalized, measles-infected children during the epidemic from December 2017 to July 2018 in the Jablanica District and to estimate the influence of socio-epidemiological factors on the severity of disease. This cross-sectional study involved 55 measles-infected, hospitalized children at the Pediatric Department of the General Hospital of Leskovac. Data were collected with an original questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics methods. The influence of factors on the severity of disease among infected children with and without complications was examined using  $\chi^2$  and t-test.  $P < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

During the measles epidemic in the Jablanica District in 2017-2018, 110 children were affected, aged 0-19 years. Out of a total measles affected children in the Jablanica District only 9 (8.18%) were vaccinated, of which 5 (4.54%) were hospitalized. A total of 55 measles-infected, hospitalized children aged  $22.85 \pm 23.94$  months were analyzed. The most infected children, 25 (45.45%), were aged 0-12 months. The infected children were mostly living in poor conditions, 34 (61.81%). Pneumonia was the most common complication, 24 (51.88%). There were no lethal outcomes. Severe complications were more frequent in younger children ( $p < 0.05$ ), in children who lived in poor conditions ( $p < 0.05$ ) and in those who had infection during the winter ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The development and implementation of strategies to achieve high coverage for measles vaccination and revaccination are necessary for measles elimination.

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