

**MEASLES EPIDEMIC IN CAMPANIA, ITALY, 2002**

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We describe the measles epidemic occurred in Region Campania in 2002.

Information on cases were obtained by a sentinel system, based on a network of primary-care paediatricians who report cases monthly (SPES). The population under surveillance includes children followed by participating paediatricians; case definition is clinical. Incidence rates are estimated per 100,000 children under 15 years.

Information on hospitalizations due to measles occurring from January to July 2002 was collected by reviewing discharge records of the five main regional hospitals with Infectious Diseases Unit. For each patient, information on gender, date of birth, date and diagnosis of hospitalisation and discharge was collected.

In 2002, a monthly average of 51 pediatricians participated to SPES in Campania, with 41,124 children < 15 years under surveillance (4% of the regional population of the same age). A total of 1,571 measles cases were reported, accounting for an annual incidence of 3,820/100,000 and an estimated total number of approximately 42,000 cases. 98% of cases occurred from January to July. In the same period, 469 children < 15 years of age were hospitalized due to measles; 99 experienced respiratory complications, 12 encephalitis, and two thrombocytopenia. Three children died.

Measles is a severe disease, that can be effectively prevented by vaccination. The epidemic in Campania is a consequence of the low vaccination coverage, that was estimated at 63% in 2001. In Italy, measles vaccination coverage varies greatly among regions; to achieve elimination, a coordinated effort to improve coverage all over the country is needed.

