

COMMUNICABLE DISESES

OVERVIEW OF PERTUSSIS EPIDEMIOLOGY IN BITOLA, NORTH MACEDONIA

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Background: Pertussis is an endemic disease in the Europe and worldwide. Every three to five years, larger epidemics are expected even with high vaccination coverage. In the first 6 months of 2024, a total of 857 cases of pertussis have been registered in Republic of North Macedonia, with an incidence of 46.7/100,000 inhabitants. That represents a several-fold increase the number of patients in relation to the past five-year period (2019-2023), when a total of 10 cases were registered.

Methods and Objectives: The aim of this study was to present the epidemiological characteristics of patients with pertussis in the period January-June 2024 in Bitola, a second largest town in North Macedonia. This is a descriptive study presenting epidemiological characteristic of patients with pertussis in Bitola, in the period January- June 2024. The data were obtained from the records at the Center for Public Health-Bitola, Department of Epidemiology.

Results: About 38 cases of pertussis were registered, with an incidence of 40.8/100,000 inhabitants, 44.7% males and 55.3% females. Median age of the patients was 11.5 years (minimum age 10 days, maximum 78 years). Most affected age groups were 5-9 years (21.1%) and 10-14 years (18.4%). According to vaccination status of the patients, 44.7% were completely vaccinated, 15.8% were incompletely vaccinated according to age, 21.1% were completely vaccinated according to age and 18.4% were unvaccinated. About 15.8% of the cases were hospitalized, and 10.5% of cases had contact with a confirmed case.

Conclusions: This study showed that pertussis continues to circulate in Bitola, in all age groups. It is important for continuous surveillance of pertussis, including appropriate contact tracing around the cases to protect close contacts at risk of severe disease.

Keywords: pertussis, epidemiology, Bitola, North Macedonia