

# The burden of seasonal influenza in Italy: a systematic review of influenza-related complications, hospitalizations, and mortality

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## Abstract

Background: reliable country-specific data on influenza burden play a crucial role in informing prevention and control measures. Our purpose was to provide a comprehensive summary of the available evidence on the burden of seasonal influenza in Italy. Methods: we performed a systematic literature review of articles published until 31 July 2020. PubMed, Embase and Web of Science were searched using terms related to burden, influenza, and Italian population. We included studies investigating seasonal influenza-related complications, hospitalizations and/or mortality. Results: sixteen studies were included: eight (50%) analyzed influenza-related complications, eight (50%) hospitalizations, while seven (43.8%) influenza-related deaths. Only three studies (19.7%) concerned pediatric age. The synthesis of results showed that patients with chronic conditions have an increased risk for complications up to almost three times as compared to healthy people. Hospitalizations due to influenza can occur in as much as 5% of infected people depending on the study setting. Excess deaths rates were over six-fold higher in the elderly as compared to the rest of population. Conclusions: although there are still gaps in existing data, there is evidence of the significant burden that influenza places each year especially on high-risk groups. These data should be used to inform public health decision-making.

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