ARE SEVERE HEAT WAVE EPISODES STILL AFFECTING MORTALITY IN ITALIAN CITIES?

Manuela De Sario Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy
Bargagli Anna Maria Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy
Michela Leone Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy
Martina Ventura Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy
Francesca de' Donato Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy
Adele Lallo Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy
Michelozzi Paola Department of Epidemiology, Lazio Regional Health Service, Italy

Background and Aims: In July 2010 the North and Centre of Italy were affected by severe heat-wave episodes. In most Italian cities an operational program for the prevention of heat-health effects is ongoing since 2004, based on city-specific Heat Health Watch Warning Systems (HHWWS). The objective is to evaluate the impact of 2010 heat-wave in Italian cities and to discuss possible public health implications.

Methods: Mortality data for all natural causes in subjects aged 65+ was retrieved from the national mortality surveillance system. The impact of the 2010 heat-wave was first explored computing excess mortality during high-risk warning days (HHWWS: level 2 and 3), as difference between observed and expected mortality from historical time series data. A time-series approach (GEE) was then used to estimate the increase in mortality during heatwave days compared to non heat-wave days in a reference period (2007-2010). Heat-wave was defined as 2 or more consecutive days with maximum apparent and minimum temperature above the 90th monthly percentile.

Results: During the July heat-wave (between 1-24 July), a significant excess in mortality was observed in 11 cities (854 deaths, around +30% increase). Results from the GEE model showed a significant increase during heat-wave days compared with non heat-wave days in several cities (+31.3% in Torino, +36.3% in Genova, +21.4% in Rome).

Conclusions: Although other analysis suggest a temporal reduction in the impact of heat on elderly mortality in Italian cities due to the introduction of heat-response plans, these results show that in 2010 heat wave episodes still have a significant impact on mortality. The evaluation of prevention measures to identify the most effective in coping with heat-waves should become a public health priority.