

The area of Taranto has been investigated in several environmental and epidemiological studies due to the presence of many industrial plants and shipyards.

Results from many studies showed excesses of mortality and cancer incidence for the entire city of Taranto, but there are no studies for different geographical areas of the city that take into account the important confounding effect of socioeconomic position.

To assess mortality and hospitalization rates of residents in Taranto, Statte and Massafra through a cohort study, with a particular focus on residents in the districts closest to the industrial complex, taking into account the socioeconomic position.

A cohort of residents during the period 1998-2010 was enrolled. Individual follow-up for assessment of vital status at 31.01.2010 was performed using municipality data. The census-tract socioeconomic position level and the district of residence were assigned to each participant, on the basis of the geocoded addresses at the beginning of the follow-up. Standardized cause specific mortality/ morbidity rates, adjusted for age, were calculated by gender and districts of residence. Mortality and morbidity Hazard Ratios (HR, CI95%) were calculated by districts and socioeconomic position using Cox models. All models were adjusted for age and calendar period, and were done separately for men and women.

Results: 321.356 people were enrolled in the cohort (48.9% males). Mortality/morbidity risks for natural cause, cancers, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases were found to be higher in low socioeconomic position groups compared to high ones. The analyses by districts have shown several excess mortality/morbidity risks for residents in Tamburi (Tamburi, Isola, Porta Napoli and LidoAzzurro), Borgo, Paolo VI and the municipality of Statte.

The results of this study showed a significant relationship between socioeconomic position and health status of people resident in Taranto. People living in the districts closest to the industrial zone have higher mortality/morbidity levels compared to the rest of the area also taking into account the socioeconomic position.

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