

Evolutionary characterization of São Jorge Thermal Spa from 2009 to 2015

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Introduction. Thermal Spa treatment has been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an important procedure that has been used since antiquity. Limitations to its use have been related to insufficient knowledge of physiological mechanisms of action, with low acceptance between medical and scientific community.

Aim. To evaluate the evolution of Thermal Spa treatment in Portugal, at the São Jorge Thermal Spa, with special attention to the pediatric population. Methods

Retrospective analysis of medical records of patients who underwent spa treatment at S. Jorge Thermal Spa, between January 2009 and December 2015. Age, gender, main diagnosis and diagnostic groups were analyzed.

Results. 19955 thermal cures were analyzed, corresponding to 13110 female patients (65.7%) and 6845 males (34.3%). The main diagnostic groups treated were respiratory and musculoskeletal diseases, and 70% of patients were aged 55 or older. The number of cures per year decreased from 2009 to 2013, and slowly increased in the next two years.

Concerning pediatric patients, the main diagnosis were asthma, allergic rhinitis, sinusitis, eczema and urticaria. There was a significant increase in the number of pediatric patients since 2011 (mean of 2.4% of the total cures from 2004 to 2010 and 3.53% between 2011 and 2015.).

Discussion/conclusions. The main diagnostic groups at São Jorge Thermal Spa are the respiratory and musculoskeletal disorders. Since 2009 there has been a decrease in the number of cures that the authors correlate with the lost of the State's co-payment starting in 2011. Nonetheless, the pediatric population has increased in this Thermal Spa, probably as a result of a campaign starting in 2007 at this Thermal Spa named Thermalkids.