

Health

Current definitions

Abortion

Termination of pregnancy before the foetus is vital, i.e. capable of independent extra-uterine life. Spontaneous abortion, or miscarriage, is distinguished from induced abortion.

A.i.d.s.

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome, identified in 1979 and defined by the insurgence of serious opportunistic infections supported by infectious agents usually controlled by cellular immunity. Contagion appears to take place exclusively through body fluids and the greatest risks are associated with homosexuality, drug use and blood transfusion centres.

Allergies

Pathological reaction against external substances or agents (medicines, food, insect stings, etc.). These include all allergic diseases independently of the type and place of manifestation: skin or eye allergies, atopic dermatitis or contact dermatitis, rashes, allergies to food, cosmetics, latex and insect stings.

Arthritis

A disease characterised by inflammation of one or more joints, manifesting with pain, swelling, rigidity, redness and limitations of movement in joints and connective tissue throughout the body. Various types of arthritis exist: osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia and gout.

Arthrosis

Disease initially characterised by the gradual breakdown of cartilage in joints, followed by a modification of all the joint's structures (bone tissue, capsule, muscles). In an advanced phase the joint may be entirely blocked with associated loss of functionality.

Average period of in-patient care

The ratio of the number of days of in-patient care and the number of in-patients. The average expresses the average amount of time (in days) between the patient's admission to hospital and their discharge, or the average number of days required for in-patient treatment.

Bed

A bed within a hospital equipped with medical staff and designed to provide full time assistance and care to a group of in-patients. A bed is located in a ward or hospital area in which medical assistance to in-patients is guaranteed and continuous. The number of beds provides a measure of the capacity of the health care facilities.

Blindness

Partial or total lack of sight; in general, blindness cannot be corrected using ordinary spectacles. Visual capacity of less than 1/20 in both eyes even with the use of correction is also considered blindness (therefore a person who cannot distinguish details of their surroundings even when using spectacles is considered to be blind).

Body mass index (IMC - BMI)

The relationship between an individual's body weight, in kilograms, and the square of their height, in metres.

Bronchial asthma

The term asthma represents a range of symptoms, and therefore covers a syndrome rather than a specific disease. The fundamental element is the difficulty in passing air through the bronchial tubes, in particular when breathing out. This is manifested in patients mainly as a "lack of air" but also as coughing, difficulty in expelling catarrh or mucus that forms in the bronchial tubes, whistling or hissing breath. The diagnosis of asthma must take account of several elements, as other diseases, including heart failure, emphysema and bronchitis.

Caesarean birth

Surgical operation to extract the foetus from the uterine cavity via incision. A Caesarean birth may be planned or performed as an emergency if necessary due to the conditions of the mother or the foetus.

Call-up for military service

The provision with which the Ministry of Defence ordered candidates, enrolled on the military service lists, to present themselves, in the year of their 18th birthday, to the military service Council for medical and psychological examination. The bill bearing the call-up to military service was displayed on the announcement board in all Municipalities in the Republic of Italy.

Cause-specific crude death rate

The number of deaths due to a specific cause (or group of causes) divided by the average Italian population in the same year (per 100,000 inhabitants).

Chronic bronchitis

Bronchitis is defined as chronic when a person expels catarrh for almost all days over the course of at least three consecutive months, for at least two consecutive years.

Conception (result of):

The way in which pregnancy is terminated. Possible results are: live birth, still birth, abortion.

Conscription call

Obligatory recruitment of all the able bodied men in a country with the aim of providing military service.

Deafness

Partial or complete lack of hearing even if corrected using acoustic aids (therefore, even someone who can only hear sounds, noises or spoken words using a hearing aid is also considered to be deaf).

Deaf-mutism

The incapacity or serious difficulty in using spoken language to express oneself due to congenital deafness or deafness acquired in early childhood. The definition includes forms of congenital mutism.

Diabetes

Disease in which the pancreas fails to produce or produces insufficient amounts of insulin, causing a pathological rise in the concentration of glucose in the blood.

Diagnosis

A clinical judgement, performed by an authorised doctor, consisting in the recognition of a disease according to the clinical examination of the patient together with the results of laboratory and instrumental analyses.

Diagnosis Related Group (DRG)

Classification of hospital cases essentially based on the principal diagnosis on discharge and surgical operations and therapies performed during in-patient stay. These classes form the DRG system which is at the basis of the new financing system for hospitals, based on specific tariffs associated with each DRG.

Discharge (Hospital)

The act of discharging a patient from a hospital at the end of in-patient care. The discharge corresponds to the last contact with the structure in which the care took place. The date of discharge is recorded on the patient's medical file and Hospital Discharge Record.

Discharged patient

Person concluding a period of in-patient care, whether they are to return home or be transferred to another structure (except in the case of transferral to a different ward of the same institution), or in the case of death. In any case, discharge results in the closing of the clinical file. Patients temporarily discharged (for family, legal or other reasons) are not included.

Emphysema

Disease characterised by loss of elasticity in the alveola in the lungs, causing loss of breath and in more serious cases respiratory and/or heart failure.

Excess weight

Excess weight people are identified according to the WHO's classification, as a group including the obese (BMI of 30 or over) and the overweight (BMI of between 25 and 29.9).

Gestation

The period, more commonly known as pregnancy, in which a woman who has conceived carries the foetus in her womb.

Heart diseases

Myocardial infarction, angina pectoris and other heart diseases. "Myocardial infarction" is the sudden death of part of the heart muscle, characterised usually by intense and incessant chest pain. "Angina pectoris" is a syndrome manifested as pain and a sensation of tightness around the chest. The organ concerned is the heart; in fact, the pain is caused by a transitory constriction of blood flow to the heart and can be more or less intense, at times localised behind the sternum. The pain may also spread to the arm, chest and fingers of the hands and can be caused by physical activity, contact with cold air and stress, while it recedes with rest. "Other heart diseases" cover other chronic heart diseases not included in the descriptions above.

Hospital

A residential structure equipped to provide full time care and assistance to patients for diagnostic, therapeutic and/or rehabilitation reasons. The structure has specialised medical staff, diagnosis and medical equipment and possibly support services for hospital assistance such as: emergency care department, reanimation centre, first aid, blood transfusion centre, dialysis centre, operating rooms, hyperbaric rooms, incubators, ambulances and mobile reanimation units. It may also be defined as the hospital body formed of the entire range of departments, sections and services, either dependent or independent of a private or public structure (such as a local health authority). Each hospital is identified by a code in compliance with the Ministry of Health Decree dated 06th September 1988.

The expression hospital indicates one of the following specific types: Hospital under direct management, formed as a company in compliance with art. 4, paragraphs 1 and 4 of Legislative Decree no. 502 dated 1992; Hospital under direct management, with local health authority; University-hospital and university polyclinic: university hospitals integrated with the National Health Service (art. 2 paragraph 2 letter a of Legislative Decree no. 517 dated 21st December 1999); hospitals integrated with a university (art. 2 paragraph 2 letter b of Legislative Decree no. 517 dated 21st December 1999); private university polyclinic; Research hospital (art. 42 Law no. 833/1978); Classified or assimilated hospital in compliance with art. 1, last paragraph, Law no. 132/1968 (art. 41 Law no. 833/1978);

Private hospital; Local health trust-owned hospital (art. 43, paragraph 2, Law no. 833/1978 and Presidential Decree dated 20th October 1988); Research institution (art. 40 Law no. 833/1978).

Hospital discharge record (SDO)

Summary of the medical file designed to allow for a collection of current, economic and easily verified information from that contained in the medical file itself. The SDO contains information regarding personal details in addition to information on the patient's admission to the sanatorium, the care received and the time of discharge.

Hospitalisation rate (per 1,000 inhabitants)

The relation between the number of in-patients and the average resident population in the year multiplied by 1,000. The statistic represents the average number of in-patients for every 1,000 residents.

Hypertension

High blood pressure or an anomalous rise in blood pressure.

In-patient

A person receiving care in a sanatorium, occupying a bed for a certain period of time in order to receive the necessary medical-surgical care, for which a clinical file is created.

Induced abortion (IVG)

Surgical operation performed by a specialist to remove the product of conception and annexes, terminating the period of pregnancy. According to current legislation (Law no.194/1978), induced abortion must take place on the specific request of the woman and within the first 90 days from conception in the case in which the continuation of the pregnancy, birth or maternity would present a serious threat to the physical or psychological health of the woman. IVG may also be performed for therapeutic reasons after the first 90 days if the pregnancy or birth presents a serious risk for the life of the woman or in the presence of considerable anomalies or malformations of the child which present a serious risk for the physical or psychological health of the woman.

Infant mortality rate

The relationship between the number of deaths occurring in the first year of life and the number of live births (per 1,000).

Infectious diseases

Diseases that can spread by direct or indirect contagion. Infectious diseases are grouped into five classes:

- diseases which require immediate reporting as of particular importance;
- diseases which are important because of high frequency and/or requiring control;
- diseases which require special documentation;
- diseases for which the doctor's report must be followed by a report from the local health authority in the presence of epidemic spots;
- infectious and contagious diseases reported to the local health authority but not covered in the points above.

International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

The Italian edition of the International Classification of Diseases, periodically published and reviewed by the World Health Organisation. The ICD is the fundamental tool for coding clinical conditions and causes of death. The X Revision of the classification has been in use since 2003.

Invalidity due to mental handicap

This type of invalidity includes congenital intellectual (Down's syndrome, microcephaly, etc.) perinatal (maternal/foetal blood group incompatibility, etc.) or acquired invalidity (meningitis, encephalitis, etc.); as well as phrenastenia, oligophrenia (permanent intellectual defects). Senile dementia is also

included in this category (Parkinson's, Alzheimer's).

Laboratory analyses for diagnosis

Clinical tests for evaluating a patient's state of health. Analyses performed during in-patient or day hospital care are excluded.

Local Health Authority (ASL)

The locally competent health authority which is responsible for health services. The authority has legal status, organisational, financial, administrative and technical independence and management, and is responsible for ensuring uniform levels of health assistance.

Major Diagnostic Category (MDC)

Grouping into 25 main diagnostic categories of the DRG classification system (see DRG entry); each group includes all the diagnoses corresponding to certain clinical criteria (anatomical or aetiological).

Military Service

The phase of obligatory military service consisting in the calling up of candidates by the authorities. The military service includes the range of operations through which the State ensures the calling, choice and introduction to the armed forces, air force, navy and auxiliary corps of citizens subject to obligatory military service.

Military service record

The record of male citizens, in chronological order by birth, that reach 17 years of age, either born or resident in a Municipality of the Republic of Italy. The record was drawn up every year on 10th April by the Mayor of each Municipality.

Median age at death

The age corresponding to which the age distribution of deaths halves. This indicator can be calculated using the observed deaths or the distribution of deaths in a life-table. In this publication, to ensure that the calculation is coherent with the oldest years in the series, the first procedure is used.

Medical consultations

Reference period of medical consultations is the four weeks before the interview. Medical consultations at, Emergency medical services, Out of hours medical assistance, during in-patient care or day hospital are excluded, while those performed for sporting activities or work requirements are included

Mobility invalidity

Serious limitation or difficulty in motor ability in one or more parts of the body due to the lack, loss or ankylosis of one or more limbs. Ankylosis is the complete loss of movement of a joint due to the degeneration and loss of function of bone surfaces.

National Health Service (SSN)

The range of functions, structures, services and activities designed to promote, maintain and recover the physical and psychological good health of the entire population, without distinctions between individual and social conditions and in such a way as to ensure equality between citizens regarding the service.

Perinatal mortality rate

The total number of still births and deaths occurring during the first week of life in relation to the overall number of births (per 1,000).

Respiratory failure

Characterised by the accumulation of carbon dioxide and a fall in the level of oxygenation of the blood. Emphysema may be present on its own or associated with chronic bronchitis.

Smoker

A person who declares to currently smoke, either every day or occasionally.

Spontaneous abortion

Involuntary termination of pregnancy due to pathological causes; in particular, the expulsion or death of a foetus or embryo occurring before the conclusion of the 180th day of gestation (25 weeks and 5 full days).

Standardised mortality rate by cause of death

This indicator is used to compare mortality in space and/or time, as it allows to control for the effect of the different population age distributions. In practice, the populations compared are supposed to have an identical age distribution, taken from a reference population (standard population).

The rate is calculated using the following formula:

$$STD = \sum_x q_x^i \times w_x \times 100000:$$

Where:

$q_x^i = d_x^i / P_x$ specific mortality rate for age x and cause i , given by the number of deaths in age class x by cause i (d_x^i) divided by the resident population in age class x (P_x);

$w_x = PS_x / PS$ weight of age class x on the total standard population (PS) taken as reference, with

$$\sum_x w_x = 1 .$$

We have chosen to use the average Italian population in 2001 as standard. Five-year age bands have been used to calculate the standardised rates, with the exception of the two initial age bands (0, 1-4 years) and the open-ended final age band (90 years and over).

Still birth

Decease of a foetus after the 180th day of gestation.

Underlying cause of death

According to the International Classification of Diseases the underlying cause of death is defined as the disease or injury that initiated the train of events leading directly to death, or the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury.