

## **The current state of knowledge of sudden infant death syndrome in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the outlook for the future**

In this issue of the journal *Acta Medica Academia*, for the first time in a medical journal in Bosnia and Herzegovina, two papers are published on the subject of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). A detailed search in Pub Med, an index of citations of biomedical literature, using the key words SIDS and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we did not find a single publication on SIDS, which was in any way related to our country. Until recently, Bosnia and Herzegovina was part of the joint state of Yugoslavia, together with the newly created states of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia; we were interested in how much was written about this problem in Yugoslavia, as well as in the newly created states. We discovered that Pub Med indexes about 20 general medical journals from the former Yugoslavia covering the years from 1948 to 2009. Conducting a search using the key words SIDS and the name of the state only two articles was located. They included an article by Kralik (1) in 2003 and comments by Zečević (2) on that paper published in 2004 in the *Liječniki vijesnik* (Doctor's Journal). This leads us to the conclusion that the problem of SIDS has not received significant attention in this region in the past 60 years.

Sudden infant death syndrome occurs throughout the world so it may be said with certainty that it also occurs in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. Moreover, in personal communication with paediatricians of different generations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the author of this article learned that paediatricians have seen and still witness this event, but they have not carried out any research on the subject, nor written about it.

However, on the basis of the fact that we have no written evidence of SIDS, the wider scholarly public could assume that doctors in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not recognize it, or it is such a common event that no one writes about it, or that there is no great interest in this issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It seems that this last assumption is the most acceptable, but regardless of which of them is correct, or if the reason is something completely other, the lack of documented, scholarly publications on demographic, sociological, epidemiological, clinical and forensic research into SIDS in Bosnia and Herzegovina impoverishes us in that aspect. On the other hand, it seems that we have forgotten the fact that these studies are important both for future generations of children and their doctors.

This issue of *Acta Medica Academia* contains two articles on SIDS. In the first article, Čajić et al. (3), presents a case of sudden infant death, illustrates the role of the primary health care institution, that if there is any suspicion surrounding the circum-

stances of the death that the medical institution insist that a thorough investigation be performed. The goal of this investigation is to provide documentation and forensic evidence to support a SIDS diagnosis. Although this article does not contain anything new about cause or prevention, it provides published evidence that SIDS occurs in this region. Moreover, it opens the possibility for discussion of this problem among health workers and other experts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the second article, Professor Steven A. Koehler (4) states that sudden infant death, in the sense of discovery of its cause, is still today a medical and forensic mystery, that is, despite a great deal of research over many years, all attempts to establish the precise cause and the manner of death have failed. However, he still asserts that for a complete picture of SIDS, even basic information on this syndrome is needed from all countries of the world. Here he also mentions that developing countries or low and middle income countries as Bosnia and Herzegovina must understand their role and the importance of research into this problem in their setting and that data collected on the phenomenon should be shared with the entire world. In that sense the article presents general guidelines for research into SIDS in developing countries.

By publishing these two articles, we expect that their content will arouse the inter-

est of medical community and other experts to devote more attention to this problem through retrospective or prospective research, to cover the epidemiological, sociological, clinical, forensic and other aspects of this phenomenon. The results obtained, as Steven A. Koehler (4) asserts, will certainly be of use to obtain a more complete picture of SIDS, and Bosnia and Herzegovina would no longer be a grey area in many scholarly or scientific reports in this field.

#### References

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