

Age Transition of Tuberculosis Patients in Taiwan, 1957-2001

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摘要

Abstract

BACKGROUND: The incidence of tuberculosis (TB) has been falling in many developed countries; however, there is a trend of an increasing proportion of TB among the elderly. The aim of this study was to evaluate the age transition of patients with TB in Taiwan from 1957 to 2001. **METHODS:** Data on the number of TB cases and patient age were collected from the National Tuberculosis Registry for three different 5-year periods: 1957-1961, 1977-1981, and 1997-2001. The distribution of TB cases in these three different periods was analyzed. **RESULTS:** The age distributions of TB patients were different among the 1957-61 ($n = 26,000$), 1977-81 ($n = 31,363$) and 1997-2001 ($n = 71,447$) groups. During the 1957-61 period, the most common age group was 25-44 years (50.9%). During 1977-81, the most common age group was 45-64 years (44.9%). In 1997-2001, the most common age group had shifted to people aged 65 years or older (43.7%). For the whole period from 1957 to 2001, after adjusting for age shifts in the general population, the proportion of TB patients had significantly increased in persons 65 years or older, slightly increased in persons aged 0-14 years, and decreased in the 15-24, 25-44, and 45-64-year-old age groups. For the period 1977-2001, age-specific registered case rates increased with age. **CONCLUSION:** The age of TB patients in Taiwan showed a rising trend from 1957 to 2001. A high index of suspicion and prompt investigation of elderly patients with signs and symptoms characteristic of TB may allow earlier diagnosis and treatment.