Cardiovascular risk factors in Portuguese children - where did Mediterranean lifestyle go?

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Introduction: It is currently now well known that Mediterranean diet and lifestyle (recognized by UNESCO since last December 2013) are both protective from dyslipidemia, overweight, obesity and high blood pressure. However, in Portugal cardiovascular risk factors seem to be an emerging public health problem.

Aim: To study the pediatric population in a tertiary pediatric cardiology centre, in order to assess current antropometry, lifestyle and cardiovascular risk factors in patients. Also we assessed cardiovascular risk in first degree relatives.

Methods: Transversal study was conducted, through chart review from the outpatient clinic of Cardiovascular Risk.

Results: We have classified the population in younger or older than 12 years-old. The total number of patients in the last 9 months were 61, 36 females, age from 5 to 20 years-old. Of these, 31 had a first degree relative with at least one cardiovascular risk factor. None had congenital heart disease, 2 were smokers, only 2 had exercise as a hobby. 21 patients had BMI > 25, 10 had total cholesterol above 200 mg/dL, 13 had high levels on fasting glucose (>100 mg/dL), 14 patients had hypertension (class I or II on ambulatory blood pressure measurement) and 4 had diffuse liver steatosis on abdominal ultrasound. At least on one medication was taken in 17 patients (blood pressure lowering agent, statins, metformin). Statistical analysis between these 2 groups will be presented when a larger population is reached.

Discussion: We found that childhood overweight, obesity, high blood pressure, dyslipidemia and diffuse liver steatosis were present in our sample. We also point out the significative amount of first degree relatives with cardiovascular risk factors and the need for further studies in congenital heart disease patients.