

The Italian Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System (PASSI): an account of the first year of activity

Noncommunicable chronic diseases contribute significantly to the burden of disease in European countries and have major economic impact. Lifestyle plays an important role in their development. In 2006, following two years of cross-sectional pilot surveys, the Italian Ministry of Health funded the Italian National Health Institute (ISS) to develop ongoing surveillance of behavioural risk factors and preventive measures such as cancer screening included in the National Prevention Plan. All 21 Italian regions agreed to participate. PASSI is centred on the 180 local health units (ASL), which are National Health System administrative divisions. Names of ASL residents 18-69 years are randomly selected, and a telephone interview is administered by specially trained local health personnel to 25 persons/month/ASL using either paper or CATI questionnaires. Records are uploaded into a common national information system, designed to ensure quality control, data analysis, process monitoring and appropriate and timely presentation of results designed to assist in local public health choices. Continuous data collection and availability of details at local (ASL and regional) level are important system characteristics. By 6/2007, 13 Regions had begun data collection, and by 6/2008 45.000 interviews are anticipated at national level; preliminary regional results will be available within 6 months, local results in 12. To promote professional development of local and regional staff, training activities are ongoing. Communications activities emphasize the system's usefulness and promote cooperation and appropriate use of the results. A web site (<http://www.epicentro.iss.it/passi/>) offers news, documentation and other services for the network and the public health community.

**Sandro Baldissera,
Nicoletta Bertozzi,
Stefano Campostrini,
Giuliano Carrozzi,
Angelo D'Argenzio,
Barbara De Mei,
Pirous Fateh-Moghadam,
Gabriele Fontana,
Stefano Menna,
Valentina Minardi,
Giada Minelli,
Valentina Possenti,
Massimo O. Trinito,
Stefania Vasselli,
Alberto Perra,
Nancy Binkin,
Stefania Salmaso**