

Assessing the impact of poor housing conditions on human health in Portugal

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Improvement on the quality housing is fundamental for reducing thermal discomfort and thus exposure to cold and a better health. Morbidity and mortality has obviously a multivariable cause and one of them is the thermal discomfort in our homes where, as a sedentary being, we spend most of our daily life. A continuous exposure to cold surely debilitates our health and will lead to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Most of the Portuguese dwellings show a poor building quality. There are several origins for these deficiencies and with consequences at different levels, in particular, in terms of human comfort. In fact, Portugal is one of the southern European countries that have higher mortality in winter. However, the number of studies relating cold weather and morbidity/mortality is still very rare. These occurrences are suspected to be associated with housing quality especially thermal insulation.

In order to assess the relation between the incidence of coronary events and housing, a national survey on patients with acute coronary syndromes in several regions of Portugal was realized during the winter months and data on the housing conditions and behavior attitudes against cold exposure were asked.

A better knowledge about the influence of weather and climate on such ailment may be applied to built up a guide for housing design (to new and restorations of old dwellings), in

policies and strategies for protection and adaptation, health planning, as well as alert systems in order to reduce the number of deaths by cardiovascular failure.

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