INDIRECT COSTS OF COMMON COLD IN GERMANY
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OBJECTIVES: To estimate the indirect costs caused by productivity loss due to simple infections of the upper respiratory tract in Germany. METHODS: A representative sample of the working population defined by membership in the social insurance in Germany (n = 994) was interviewed concerning the annual incidence, work-off days and days at work with limited productivity. The sample was representative concerning age, sex and social status, and stratified by age, sex, region (eastern and western part of Germany) and working status e.g. employee, worker, trainee etc. Productivity losses were valued using the human capital approach (HC) and the friction cost method (FC). Data were extracted from different German administrative sources like the federal institute for statistics. RESULTS: The mean number of work-off days was 2.9 d. At 11.6 d per year the productivity was limited by 35% due to a cold. The total annual productivity loss per person was 7 d. The mean costs per working person were €1009 (HC) respectively €807 (FC) using stratified mean incomes of year 2004. Aggregated to the total working population of Germany the indirect costs of illness in 2004 were about 29.2 billion € (HC) respectively 23.3 billion € (FC). There was a clear trend to lower cost in men and in younger age groups. CONCLUSIONS: Although the direct medical costs per person for the treatment of common cold without complications are low, the high incidence of the disorder induces impressively high indirect costs caused by short-time work-off and a relevant number of days at work with a limited productivity due to a cold.

IMPLEMENTING NATURAL HISTORY STUDIES IN EURASIA: THE NIEMANN-PICK EXPERIENCE WITH RAPIDLY CHANGING NATIONAL REGULATIONS
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OBJECTIVE: Characterizing morbidity and mortality in rare genetic diseases is challenging given the small numbers of patients, their wide geographic distribution, and the variable effects of genetic mutations. Global natural history studies aim to close the knowledge gap but require the participation of multiple countries to achieve this goal. METHODS: In 2006, Genzyme Corporation initiated a retrospective natural history feasibility study of acid sphingomyelinase deficiency (ASMD, also known as Niemann Pick disease Types A and B) in 8 Eurasian countries. ASMD is an inherited lysosomal storage disorder that affects approximately 2000 patients in developed countries and has no specific treatment. The goal of the study was to determine whether investigators would be able to implement a medical record abstraction study of ASMD. The objective of the post-feasibility study is to provide improved estimates of morbidity and mortality that can help facilitate drug development. RESULTS: Eurasian investigators were enthusiastic about participating in and improving knowledge on this rare and life-threatening disease, but they were cautious about interpreting existing/evolving regulations for each country. Some coun-