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### Out-of-hours telephone consultations in a rural primary care setting of Northern Greece

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**Background and Aim:** Primary care physicians play a central role as first-line providers of health care both during office hours as well as out-of-hours, due to an eventual urgent need for medical care. Aim of this study was to register common reasons for encounter via phone contact during out-of-hours, in a rural primary care setting.

**Method:** A total of 226 telephone calls from 136 persons were recorded at the electronic medical records of a primary care setting in Alonakia region, Northern Greece, from January 2014 until December 2015. Age, sex, reason for encounter and management were tabulated. ICPC-2 classification was used for codification. Descriptive statistics were carried out.

**Results:** Sixty males and 76 females with median age 68.4 years used a phone contact for medical services in a 2 year period. One hundred and sixteen calls (51.3%) were made by the patient himself and the remaining 48.7% by a family member. Phone calls for new-onset health problems accounted for 72.6%, for chronic medical conditions (22.1%) and for death certificate (5.3%). General and unspecified reasons accounted for 26.9% followed by respiratory (11.6%), digestive (9.4%), cardiovascular (8%) and mental health (7.1%) problems. Most common reasons for encounter were fever (A03) (9.2%), cough (R05) (8.4%), concern/fear medical treatment (A19) (8.4%), abnormal result investigation NOS (A91) (7.5%) and dysuria/painful urination (U01) (4.8%). A medical advice was given to 205 (90.7%) patients, a medical prescription to 36 (15.9%), further investigation with laboratory tests was recommended to 14 (6.1%) while 30 (13.2%) patients were referred to an emergency department.

**Conclusions:** Out-of-hours telephone consultations in a rural area of Greece appear to likely cover routine primary care needs. This finding could represent an indirect element that patient needs are not sufficiently covered by the daily services offered in primary care.