

# Indoor environmental risk factors for pediatric respiratory diseases in an underserved community in Santiago, Chile

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## Abstract:

**Background:** In Chile, Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) is the leading cause of pediatric hospital admissions and repeated health care visits. Household pollution is one of the main risk factors for ARI, particularly in poor areas and crowded homes. Research has been focused mainly on outdoor air pollution, while only a few studies have focused on indoor risk factors. **Methods:** We conducted a descriptive study to identify indoor risk factors for respiratory symptoms in a poor community in Santiago, Chile. The study included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to characterize the presence of environmental risk factors, as well as to ascertain the knowledge and attitudes of the children's caregivers towards pollution and its effects on health. **Results:** The population studied included 50 families. Thirty two percent of the children had histories of past illnesses, of these, 87.5% had asthma. Twenty-four percent of the families reported that at least one person smoked at home and 62% had animals living inside the house. Liquefied gas was identified as the most common primary source of heating energy. Participants reported the subjective presence of air pollution throughout their homes. **Conclusions:** Poor communities are exposed to numerous indoor environmental risk factors related to respiratory diseases. There is a lack of knowledge among the children's caregivers about the ill effects of pollution on children's health. Addressing this issue with the community is crucial for increasing the awareness of parents and thereby improving their children's health.

**Keywords::** Environmental pediatrics | Environmental health | Children | Environmental hazards | Environmental prevention | Air pollution | Indoor

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