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Title: Risk factors for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis in Southern Europe: A case-control study

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Body: Background: Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) is a chronic, progressive fibrosing interstitial pneumonia of unknown cause associated with the histopathologic and/or radiologic pattern of usual interstitial pneumonia (UIP). In America, Northern Europe and Japan occupational risk factors have been found to be significantly associated with IPF. Objective: The objective of this study is to evaluate the relationship between occupational exposure IPF in Southern Europe. Methods: The study population comprised 66 patients from Umbria, Central Italy, with a diagnosis of IPF based on UIP radiological pattern at CT-scan. Controls (n=276) were ascertained casually among general population from the same catching area without a doctor diagnosed pulmonary fibrosis. Data were collected using a questionnaire used previously in a similar survey. Logistic regression adjusted for sex, age and smoking habits was used to evaluate the association between IPF and occupational risk factors. Results: Exposures to cutting oils (OR=9.65,95%CI=1.32-70.34) or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) at work (OR=1.96,95%CI=1.03-3.73) were risk factors for IPF. Household exposure to ETS (OR=2.13,95%CI=1.11-4.08) or taking care of birds at home (OR=2.14,95%CI=1.13-4.05) were also associated with IPF. Conclusions: This is the first study on occupational risk factors for IPF where case definition is based on the new ATS/ERS Statement. In this study cutting oils and ETS seem to be relevant risk factors for IPF. Our results do not confirm data from previous similar studies. This discrepancy could be explained by the different geographical origins of the populations considered, reflecting also different occupational exposures.