

International Conference and Expo on **Audiology and Hearing Devices**

August 17-18, 2015 Birmingham, UK

Implementation of universal newborn hearing screening program and health legislation

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Objective: Aim of this study was to evaluate the state of implementation of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) programs in Italy and to determine the effect that UNHS legislation may have on their performance.

Methods: UNHS data were obtained during four national surveys performed in calendar years 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2011.

Results: By the end of year 2011, UNHS legislation was passed in seven out of 20 Italian regions. The analysis of the data revealed that screening coverage rate had a steep increase on a national basis from year 2003 to year 2011 and remained low in a very few district areas only. In 2011, the average coverage rate was 78.3%. In twelve out of 20 Italian regions the coverage was greater than 95%. Coverage rate was greater in regions with implemented UNHS legislation than in regions with no UNHS legislation. As a matter of fact, regions which passed UNHS legislation screened at more than 95% of infants whereas regions without legislation reported a mean screening rate of nearly 67% of newborns.

Conclusion: Current results seem to suggest that legislation might have a positive effect on UNHS program performance.

Biography

Luciano Bubbico is specialised in Otolaryngology Head and Neck surgery at the University of Rome La Sapienza Italy, he is a Senior Researcher of Otolaryngology and Biomedical Sciences at Italian Institute of Social Medicine. His research collaborations have contributed to national and international guidelines on neonatal Hearing Loss Prevention. He is a consultant to health care planners and decision makers nationally and internationally. He is a Member of Italian Society of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery of Italian Society of Neonatology (Research group of Sense Organs Prevention). He is the Director of Neonatal Hearing Screening Program in Italy from 2001. He is the author of more than 50 scientific articles and of 2 books on the topic of Neonatal hearing Loss.

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