

19 Limitations

The case control study was performed under extreme time-pressure (set up and completing the questionnaire, entering and analysis data in less than one week). There was no time to search for specific tools for testing MSI hypothesis. Questions on SF36 scores addressed the feeling of the students at the moment of the incident and they did measure neither the personality structure nor the mental health.

A delay of 15 days between the start of the incident (first outbreak in the first school) and the investigation could be responsible for a recall bias affecting the answers on symptoms, the consumption time of beverages or the time of the onset of the disease.

The results of this study need to be confronted to toxicological analysis of beverages. The lack of clear answer concerning the analysis done on the Coca-Cola consumed in Bornem and the imprecision of the kinetic curve of the incriminated products and its concentration during the consumption are major deficiencies.

This study only included the cases occurring in the schools, while many other cases occurred in the community.