

8 Symptoms

8.1 Symptoms of the students of Bornem

Abdominal pain, headache, nausea, respiratory problems, trembling and dizziness were the principal complaints collected from the medical records (Table 1). The number and the variability of the symptoms notified by the students were more important than those identified by medical records.

Respiratory problems were more frequently reported among the students of Bornem (25.0%) than among the students of the other schools (4.8%) ($p=0.01$) (Table 13 and 15), explaining the requested chest-radiography.

Clinical examination was normal for 27 cases except an extreme pallor for the first cases. For 3 patients, a sensitive abdomen or staggering was noted. For 2 patients, medical data were unknown.

Among the 37 cases identified in Bornem, 32 went to the emergency unit. 12 were hospitalised at least one night.

Twenty students went to the emergency unit with a private car. There were 12 missing data for this variable. None of the cases went to the hospital by ambulance.

Among the 32 students who went to the emergency unit, 22 came from school, 3 from home and for 7 data were not available.

All symptoms disappeared spontaneously without specific treatment for 25 students. Seven cases received a symptomatic treatment (glucose, oxygen, antalgic, and aerosol).

Six students came back within a few days for a consultation because of persistence of symptoms.

Table 1 - Symptoms collected from the students and from the medical records, Bornem, Belgium 1999.

Symptoms	Medical information (%) n = 32	Student information (%) n = 37
Headache	20 (62.5)	33 (89.2)
Abdominal pain	18 (56.3)	35 (94.6)
Nausea	13 (40.6)	29 (78.4)
Respiratory troubles	8 (25)	5 (13.5)
Trembling	7 (21.9)	32 (86.5)
Dizziness	7 (21.9)	26 (70.3)
Asthenia	7 (21.9)	1 (2.7)
Weakness	3 (9.3)	6 (16.2)
Other	23 (71.9) *	36 (97.3) **

Patients had more than one symptom.

* Asthenia, myasthenia, troubles of the visual acuity, scotoma, backache, painful throat, hand-tingling, drowsiness, vomit, diarrhoea, malaise, palpitation.

** Malaise, vomit, diarrhoea, troubles of sleep, troubles of the visual acuity, hand-tingling.

We compared the symptoms of the first 12 cases (before 2h00 p.m.) to the symptoms of the other students to look after the severity and the difference between the 2 groups. The proportion of the main symptoms (headache, nausea, abdominal pain, dizziness and trembling) was higher among the

first 12 cases than among later cases. Trembling characterised more frequently the later other cases than the first 12 cases (Table 2).

Table 2 - Symptoms of the first cases compared to the symptoms of the following cases, data from the medical records, Bornem, Belgium 1999.

Symptoms	First cases (%) n = 12	Other cases (%) n = 20
Headache	10 (83.3)	10 (50.0)
Nausea	8 (66.7)	5 (25.0)
Abdominal pain	7 (58.3)	11 (55.0)
Dizziness	4 (33.3)	3 (15.0)
Trembling	1 (8.3)	6 (30.0)
Respiratory troubles	4 (33.3)	4 (20)
Asthenia	3 (25)	4 (20)
Weakness	0	3 (15)

Patients had more than one symptom.

8.2 Symptoms of the students of the other schools

Headache, abdominal pain, nausea, dizziness and trembling were the principal complaints identified through the review of medical records. During the interview students more frequently notified symptoms than were collected from the medical records, particularly dizziness and trembling (Table 3).

Few students complained of leg pain, myalgia or muscles cramp.

Clinical examination was normal for 56 cases. For 6 patients, flush and/or red eyes were noted.

Among the 75 cases identified in the other schools, 62 went to the emergency unit, 12 were hospitalised at least one night (7 one night, 4 two nights and 1 three nights).

Twenty-three students went to the emergency with an ambulance and 4 with a private car. For 35 cases, data for this variable were missing.

Among the 62 hospitalised cases, 26 came directly from school, 1 from home and for 35 this information was not available.

All symptoms disappeared spontaneously without specific treatment for 44 students. Thirteen cases received a symptomatic treatment (glucose, antalgic, and "Primperan®" for abdominal discomfort).

A few days later, 2 students came back for consultation because of persistence of symptoms.

Table 3 - Symptoms collected from the students ' interviews and from the medical records, Other schools, Belgium 1999.

Symptoms	Medical information (%) n = 62	Student information (%) n = 75
Headache	48 (77.4)	67 (89.3)
Abdominal pain	39 (62.9)	68 (90.7)
Nausea	36 (58.1)	66 (88)
Dizziness	19 (30.6)	41 (54.7)
Trembling	18 (29)	60 (80)
Respiratory troubles	3 (4.8)	2 (2.7)
Weakness	3 (4.8)	9 (12)
Other	61 (98.4)*	62 (86.7)**

Patients had more than one symptom.

*Loss of appetite, neck pain, myalgia, back pain, flush, feel hot, shiver, anxiety, red eyes, malaise, somnolence, transpiration, feeling warm or cold or hot, loss of consciousness, vomiting, diarrhoea,.

**Arm tingling, back pain, neck pain, palpitation, feeling cold/hot, eyes pain, myalgia, loss of the visual acuity, throat pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, blood in stool, malaise.