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Are we getting there? The pursuit of health equity in Portugal

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Objetivos (Objectives):

This study aims to detect and measure health care inequity in the Portuguese system.

Metodologia (Methodology):

The concentration curve and concentration index are computed to obtain an index of horizontal equity. Taking into account factors that justify different levels of utilization of health care allows for the detection and analysis of inequity. A nonlinear model (zero-inflated negative binomial model) is used to obtain the level of utilization of health care according to need.

Resultados (Results):

Based on the Portuguese National Health Survey 2005/2006, the results suggest that there is a pro-rich inequity, with the poor individuals consuming less medical services and being the ones with higher need for those services. Regional disparities, in terms of health inequity, are clear. Some barriers to access the system are also identified, especially to the poor.

Conclusões (Conclusions):

Portugal has a relatively high pro-rich inequity by international standards. Two conclusions were achieved: first, at the national level, the wealthier individuals consume more medical services relative to their need for those services; and second, barriers to access still exist.