



## ORIGINAL

# Pediatric and neonatal transport in Spain, Portugal and Latin America<sup>☆</sup>



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### KEYWORDS

Pediatric transport;  
Neonatal transport;  
Transport team;  
Health transport;  
Education in  
pediatric transport

### Abstract

**Objective:** To study the organization of inter-hospital transport of pediatric and neonatal patients in Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

**Design:** An observational study was performed. An on-line survey was sent by email including questions about characteristics of national, regional and local health transport systems, vehicles, material, and composition of the transport team and their training.

**Setting:** Hospital pediatric healthcare professionals treating children in Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

**Results:** A total of 117 surveys from 15 countries were analyzed. Of them, 55 (47%) come from 15 regions of Spain and the rest from Portugal and 13 Latin American countries. The inter-hospital transport of pediatric patients is unified only in the Spanish regions of Baleares and Cataluña and in Portugal. Chile has a mixed unified transport system for pediatric and adult patients. Only 51.4% of responders have an educational program for the transport personnel, and only in 36.4% of them the educational program is specific for pediatric patients. In Spain and Portugal the transport is executed mostly by public entities, while in Latin America public and private systems coexist. Specific pediatric equipment is more frequent in the transport teams in the Iberian Peninsula than in Latin American teams. The specific pediatric transport training is less frequent for teams in Latin America than on Spain and Portugal.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Transporte pediátrico;  
Transporte neonatal;  
Equipos de transporte;  
Transporte sanitario;  
Formación en transporte pediátrico

*Conclusions:* There is a great variation in the organization of children transport in each country and region. Most of countries and cities do not have unified and specific teams of pediatric transport, with pediatric qualified personnel and specific material.

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**Transporte pediátrico y neonatal en España, Portugal y Latinoamérica****Resumen**

*Objetivo:* Estudiar la organización del transporte interhospitalario pediátrico y neonatal en la península ibérica y Latinoamérica.

*Diseño:* Estudio observacional prospectivo mediante una encuesta enviada por correo electrónico con preguntas sobre el sistema de transporte nacional, regional y local, el tipo y vehículo de traslado, el material y el personal y su formación.

*Ámbito:* Responsables pediátricos de hospitales de España, Portugal y Latinoamérica.

*Resultados:* Se analizaron 117 encuestas provenientes de 15 países. De ellas, 55 (47%) procedían de 15 comunidades autónomas de España y el resto de Portugal y de 13 países latinoamericanos. Muy pocas regiones y ciudades tienen un sistema de transporte pediátrico y neonatal específico. El transporte solo está unificado en las comunidades españolas de Baleares y Cataluña y en Portugal. En Chile el sistema de transporte es mixto, pediátrico y del adulto. Solo un 51,4% de los hospitales tiene un sistema de formación del personal de transporte, y solo en el 36,4% la formación es específica en transporte pediátrico. En España y Portugal los sistemas de transporte son fundamentalmente públicos, mientras que en Latinoamérica coexisten sistemas públicos y privados. Los equipos de transporte de la península ibérica tienen más material pediátrico y neonatal y reciben más formación en transporte pediátrico que los de Latinoamérica.

*Conclusiones:* Existe una gran variabilidad en la organización del transporte pediátrico en cada país y región. En la mayoría de los países y ciudades no existe un sistema unificado y específico de transporte pediátrico con un personal cualificado y un material de traslado específico.

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**Introduction**

Medical transport takes human and material medical care resources to places that lack such resources, and in turn takes the ill patient to the place where medical care resources are available—this being particularly important when intensive care or emergency surgery is needed.<sup>1,2</sup>

Medical transport is of vital importance within the chain of care. Although speed is clearly an important factor in the emergency transfer of patients, the quality of transport is crucial—and this fundamentally depends on the organization, coordination and preparation of the transport system and equipment, and on the material means available.<sup>1,2</sup>

There are different types of medical transport. Depending on the means used, it can be classified as overland, by air, or by water (maritime-fluvial). Overland transport is the most widely used modality in view of its accessibility and operability. In turn, depending on where it takes place, transport is classified as out-hospital, i.e., from the site of the emergency to the healthcare center; inter-hospital; or in-hospital.

Pediatric transport is a key element in the chain of survival in critically ill children and for the provision of healthcare continuity.<sup>1</sup> The importance of organizing a pediatric system differentiated from adult transport is due to

the specific characteristics of pediatric patients, which have their own specific physiological and disease parameters. Furthermore, pediatric transfer often requires the use of materials and treatment techniques different from those used in adults—and this in turn implies the need for specific training on the part of the staff in charge of transport.<sup>1,3</sup>

Despite its importance, no large multicenter studies have analyzed the characteristics and needs of pediatric transport—such information being essential in order to plan and organize a transport system for this particular population group.

The present study analyzes and compares the organization of inter-hospital pediatric and neonatal transport in Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

**Methods**

A prospective observational study was carried out based on a survey distributed by e-mail among pediatric care supervisors belonging to hospitals and transport systems in Spain, Portugal and Latin America. An invitation to participate was also sent through the Spanish Society of Pediatric Intensive Care (*Sociedad Española de Cuidados Intensivos Pediátricos* [SECIP]) and the Latin American Society of Pediatric

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