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**From birth to death in a population experiencing exceptional longevity:  
the case of Villagrande Strisaili (Sardinia)**

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**ABSTRACT**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the scientific world in the emergence of centenarians as they are seen as a valid example of individuals experiencing successful ageing. Among these studies, several researches have also regarded Sardinian centenarians. However, the presence of centenarians in the island has shown to be heterogeneous and exceptional longevity (especially of males) was identified particularly in a mountainous area of Sardinia between the municipalities of Nuoro and Lanusei.

Within the municipalities identified in this area of longevity, so called Blue Zone, the village of Villagrande Strisaili emerges as the one where the highest level of longevity is observed. Despite very high infant and child mortality rates (around 30%), for the cohorts between 1866 and 1915 it was found that a newborn out of five reaches the age of 80 years. More than 2,000 newborns in these cohorts have been followed until death using complete validated data. Data were gathered from civil registers and population registers (anagrafe). For approximately 90% of these individuals the exact date of death was found. The high percentage of coverage reached has to be partially attributed to family formation strategies of the inhabitants of Villagrande Strisaili which are characterized by a high endogamy but also to the completeness of used data sources.

Through the use of family reconstruction data and crossed information for the male population from the military lists, it will be possible to estimate the impact of early life conditions on the probability for individuals born in Villagrande between 1866 and 1915 to reach the age of 80 and 90 years. Different variables have been included in the analysis, which attain to the individual, to family and to contextual level.

The results from this analysis will be compared with recent findings in other populations.