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Title of the poster

Exploring Demographic Differences in Health Status and Health Services Use by Older Adults. A Comparative Study between Canada and Spain

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Research issue. National Health Surveys are important instruments for measuring how healthy a population and the national health care system are, and for exploring cross-national data. In this context, the goal is to search demographic differences in self-rated health, morbidity, disability and health services use in Canada and Spain. These two countries are characterised by universality in their health care systems and a significant ageing of their population.

Methods. The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS, 2003) and the Spanish National Health Survey (ENSE, 2003) have been used. The study sample consisted of the population aged 50 and over. Data on socio-demographic aspects and self-rated health status, morbidity, difficulty with daily activities and health services use have been analysed.

Statistical techniques have been applied to explore relationships between variables and to examine health differences.

Results and discussion. Similar results on health profiles and use of health services between Canada and Spain were expected. Older adults had worse self-rated health status and used more health services than younger people. The analysis of the data has shown that worse health status and higher levels of medical consultations in women vs men could be explained by gender-specific health profiles: older females reported more difficulties in daily living activities and higher levels of medical consultations, while males experienced slightly higher levels of hospitalization. This pattern was observed in both countries, which shared similar differences of health profiles and health service utilization between sexes. Spain indicated, however, slightly greater differences between males and females, in general; this being most apparent in self-perceived health status.

The association between self-rated health and use of services has been well-documented. Other country-specific factors, such as socio-cultural aspects of the population or public policies carried out, may explain possible differences between Canada and Spain.