

ALMOST 70,000 PATIENTS ABUSE HOSPITAL A&E SERVICE

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A recent study shows that in the province of Alicante almost 70,000 patients are calling on the services of Hospital A&E Departments every year without due cause and as such the President of the Medical College (OMC), Juan José Rodríguez Sendín, is proposing to charge those patients who consciously misuse the facility.



However, despite recognising that there is abuse, the suggestion is opposed by Health Authorities. They say that it would be far better to educate the patient rather than impose sanctions. Health Professionals recognize the problem and accept there is a need for it to be addressed but they advocate the implementation of appropriate campaigns and the enhancement of resources at local health centres.

Last year, almost 70,000 Alicantos attended hospital A&E Departments without needing it, all attending for non urgent cases. This put an additional load on the service which, during 2013 handled a total of 76,180 emergency cases, an increase of 7,800 than in the previous year.

Once in the A&E Department patients are classified according to the degree of emergency by el sistema de triaje Manchester, the Manchester triage system. This is a program consisting of five levels with each corresponding to a colour. Those who require immediate attention are assigned to the Red level. The Orange level indicates that the case is very urgent while those patients allocated to the colour yellow could be expected to wait for up to an hour. The other two groupings are both non-urgent cases into which 68,908 cases were categorised last year, an increase of more than 6,300 on 2012.

The president of the Alicante College of Physicians, José Pastor, has also distanced himself from the proposal to sanction non urgent cases, but confirmed that there is a clear requirement of the need to educate "frequent attenders".

The president of the College of Nursing in the Region (CECOVA), José Antonio Ávila, also shares the same opinion advocating the need for educational campaigns, and the allocation of additional resources at primary care level.