

Patient house calls in Attica and Thessaloniki, Greece (2005-2015): a model for out-of-hospital emergency multi-specialty medicine

George Theocharis¹, MD, Spyridon G. Barbas¹, MD, Theodore Spiropoulos¹, MD, Petroula E. Stamouli³, Dimitrios N. Perdakis³, Matthew E. Falagas², MD, MSc, DSc
 1.SOS doctors, Athens, Greece , 2.Alfa Institute of Biomedical Sciences (AIBS) Athens, Greece, 3.Department of Applied Mathematics and Physics NTU of Athens

Background:

House calls remain an important but underestimated part of medical care. The interest of home care in the 21st century will be increased because of the continuously aging, disability and frailty of the population and also increased pressure on health care economics. The SOS Doctors are a network of physicians of most clinical specialties who perform house-calls visits on 24 hour basis since 1993.



Patients & Methods :

To describe the characteristics of patients requesting house calls as well as physical practice we analyzed retrospectively data for 335.212 medical visits by the SOS Doctors in the area of Attica and Thessaloniki, during the period 1/1/2005 – 31/12/2015.

Data collection:

The available data regarding 335.212 home visits were stratified based on patients' demographics and time of the visit to analyze patterns of utilization of this health care service. The data were analyzed to evaluate the diagnosis as well as the recommendations provided to the patients regarding the need for hospitalization.

Results & discussion :

Females requesting home visits more frequently compared to males (60,5% versus 39,5%). Among the age – groups patients over 75 years made 56,6% of all house calls. Less phone requests were recorded during autumn than in winter (21,1% versus 29,1%). Infections were the most common cause of house – visits (29%). Cardiovascular diseases were also a significant proportion (10,3%) , followed by musculoskeletal (9,1%), gastrointestinal (6,3%) and neurological disorders (3,7%). An increasing demand for radiology at home was observed , starting at 352 calls in 2009 and reaching 2.230 in 2015. Finally 9,2% of patients were advised to be admitted into a hospital. A shift towards older age, but not the oldest old (>90 years), and acute conditions was observed.

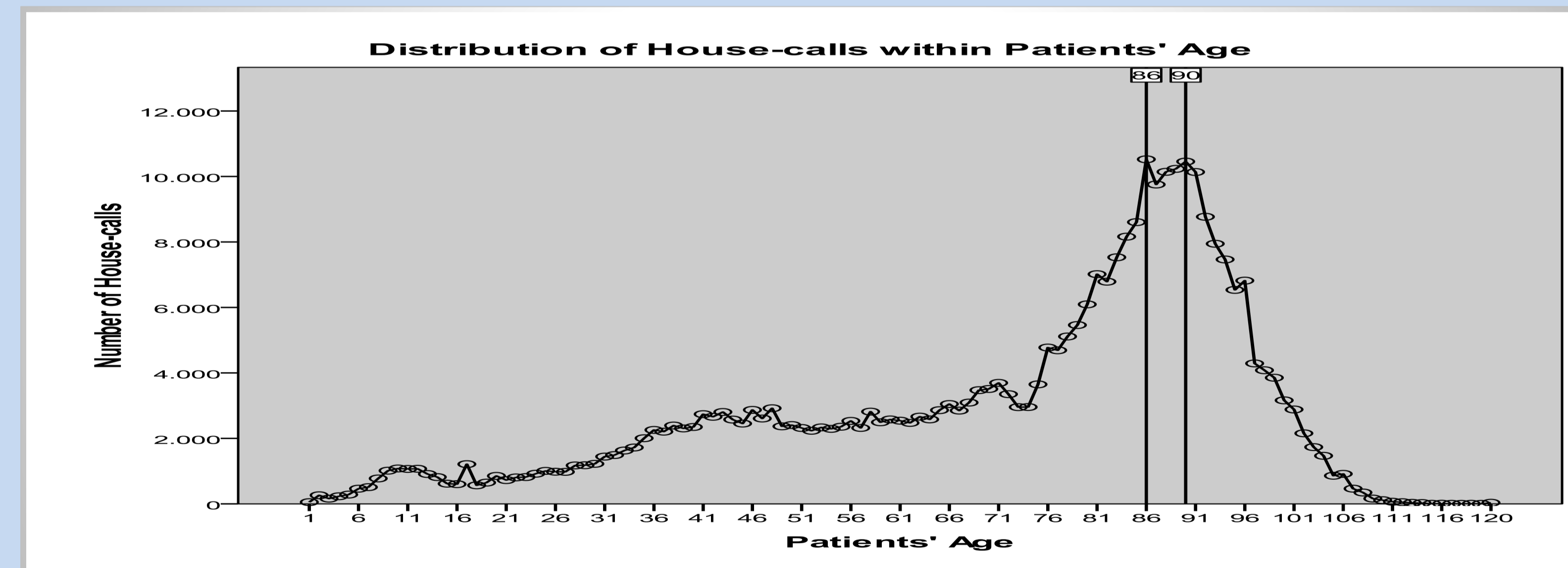


Figure 1: Distribution of calls within age

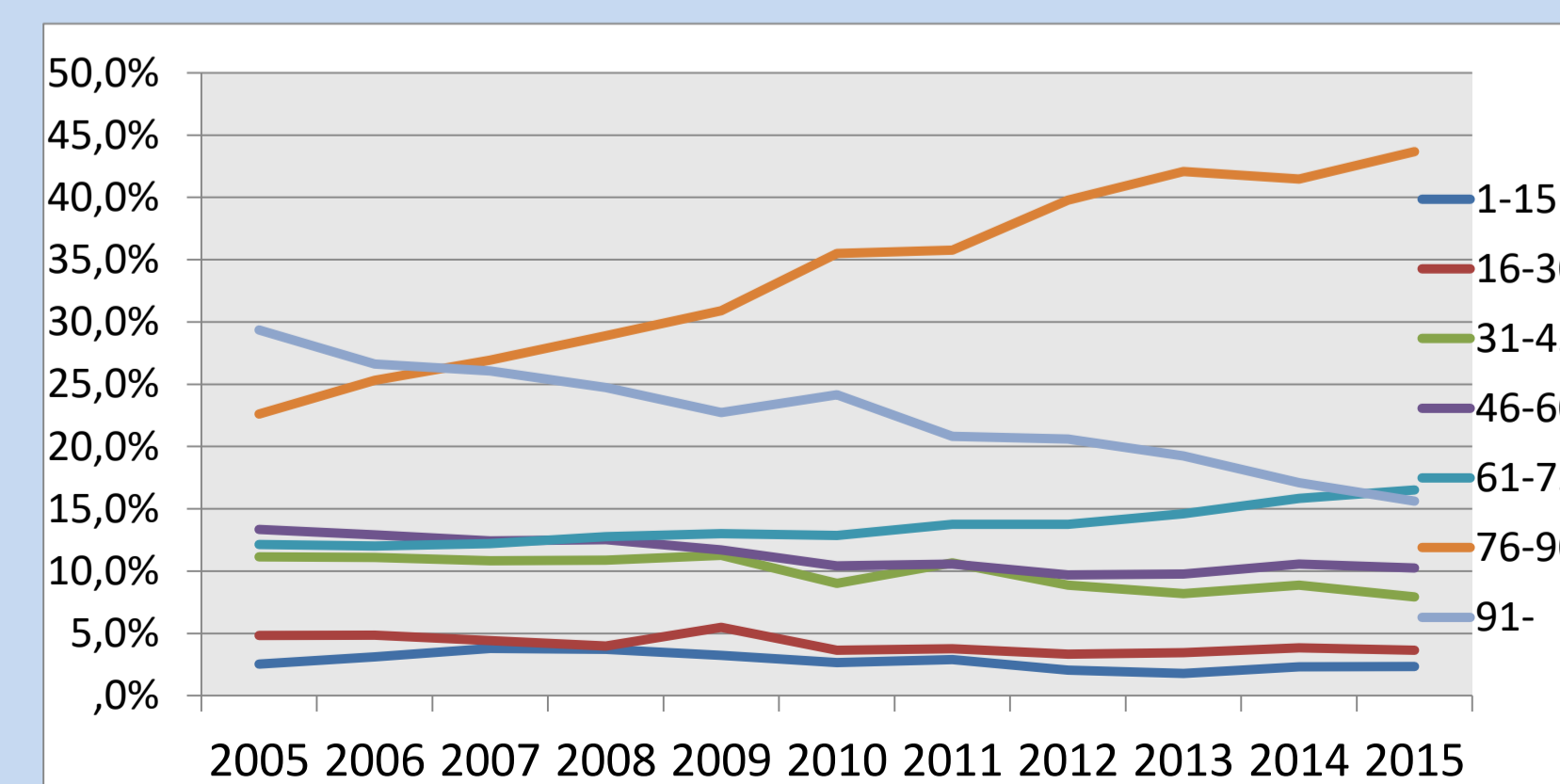


Figure 2. Proportion of home-visits according to age groups during the study period.

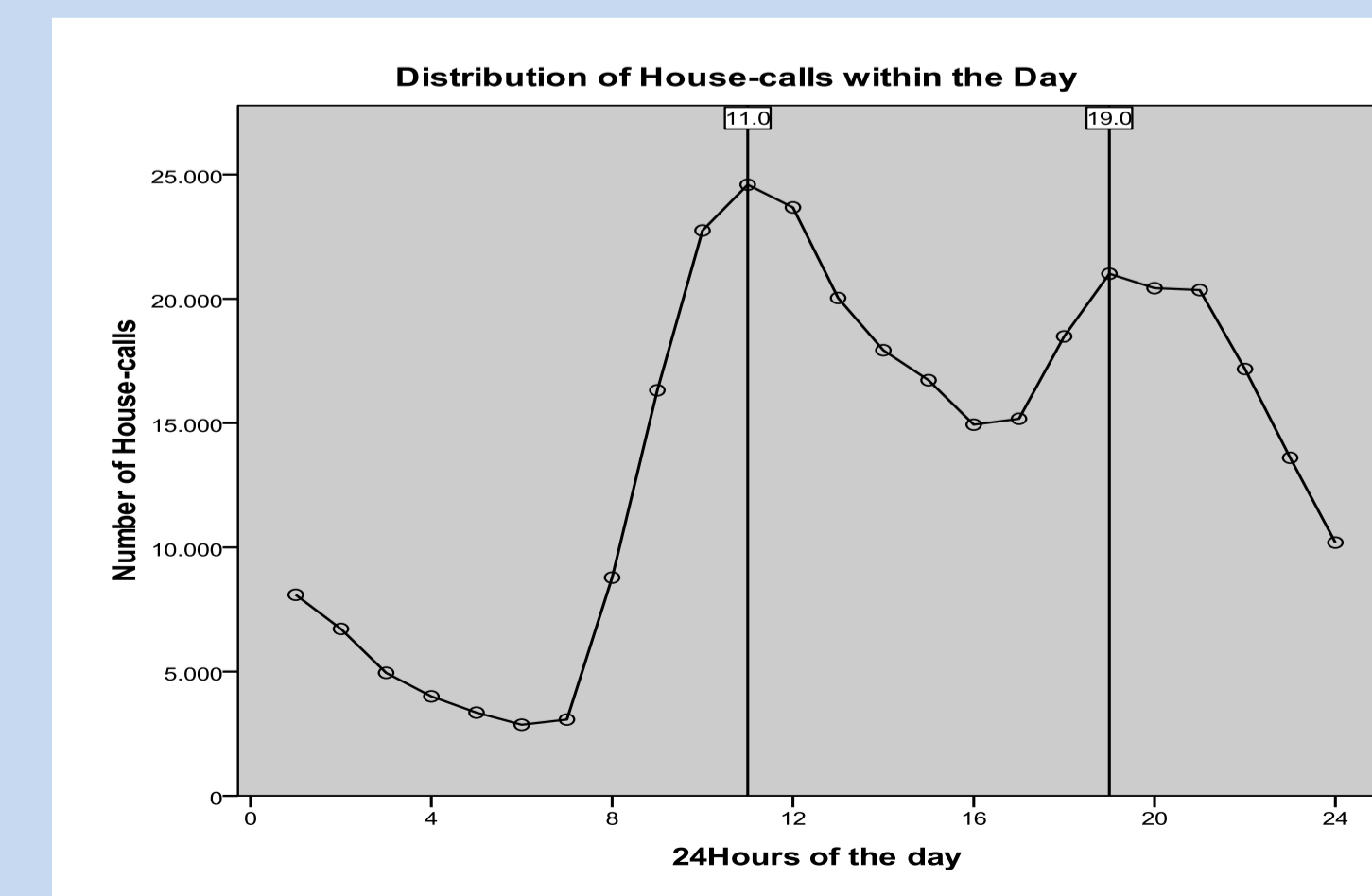


Figure 3: Distribution of calls within day

DISEASES/ DISORDERS	N of house-calls	% of all house-calls
Infections	97293	29,02%
Cardiovascular	34665	10,34%
Musculoskeletal	30630	9,14%
Gastrointestinal	22972	6,85%
Neurological	12305	3,67%
E.N.T.	12112	3,61%
Psychiatric	10060	3,00%

Table 2 : Most common cause of house-visits

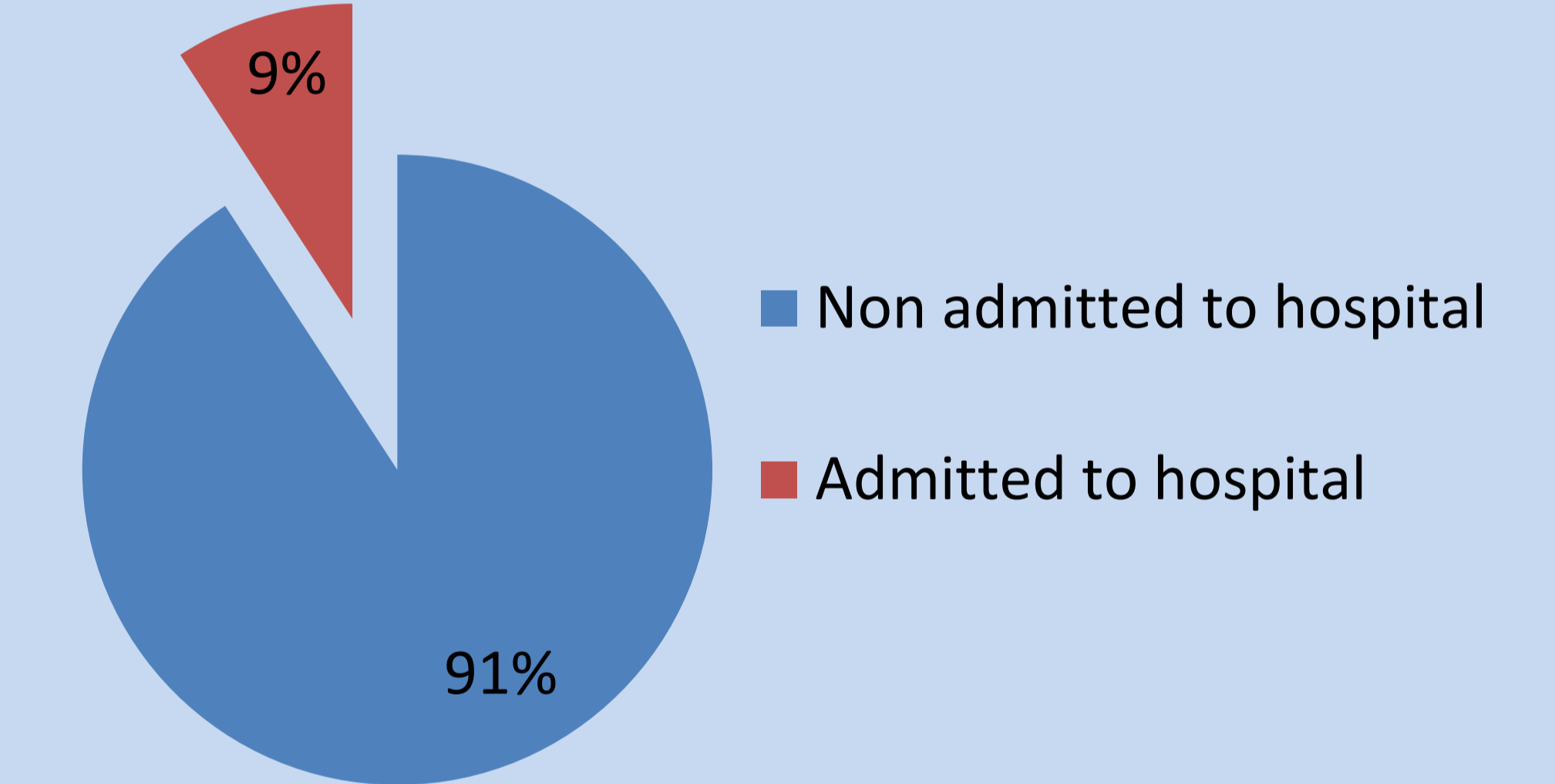


Figure 4 : Rate of patients admitted to hospital

Conclusion & perspectives :

This analysis provide insights to the request of home visits by specialists in Greece. Despite ongoing financial crisis the demand for home visits did not decreased substantially. A shift toward older age and acute conditions was observed. Only 9,2% of patients were admitted into a hospital. This study confirms that home visits retain a significant role in the modern health care system.