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Backsliding: Relative worsening of infant mortality rates in Argentina in the second half of the twentieth century

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Escudero JC, Massa C. Cifras del retroceso: el deterioro relativo de la tasa de mortalidad infantil de Argentina en la segunda mitad del siglo XX / Backsliding: Relative worsening of infant mortality rates in Argentina in the second half of the twentieth century. Salud Colectiva (Buenos Aires, Argentina) 2006 Sept.–Dec.; 2(3):249–57.

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to measure the decline in health in Argentina by examining trends in the infant mortality rate in the second half of the twentieth century, and comparing the rate with that of other countries in the New World.

Methodology: Review of vital statistics and population censuses. Data from population projections were corrected in order to address potential coverage problems.

Results: The authors state that although the infant mortality rate has steadily declined, there has been a relatively worsened which is more evident when Argentina is compared with other countries where the IMR has fallen faster and to a greater degree. During the period 1950–1955, Argentina was in second place in Latin America, but by 2000–2005, it had slipped to fifth place with a rate of 15.0, and doubled Cuba's rate of 7.3 deaths per thousand live births. The authors find a comparison with Caribbean countries even more disturbing. In the first five years of the study period, 1950–1955, Argentina was in third place, behind only Puerto Rico and Martinique, but by the five-year period 2000-2005, Argentina was in ninth place, with twice the infant mortality rate of Martinique and Guadalupe. The authors give estimates of the number of deaths which could have been avoided if Argentina's IMR had been the same in 2000–2005 as that of the countries to which it was compared. For example, if the IMR in Argentina had been the same as in Cuba, there would have been 5.256 fewer infant deaths in each year of the period.

Conclusions: The authors condemn the relative increase of Argentina's infant mortality in comparison with other countries in the Americas.