

## Perceptions of continuity of care by the users of the healthcare systems in Colombia and Brazil

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### Background

Continuity of care (CC) is the degree to which the patient experiences care over time as coherent and linked. Three types of CC are identified: relational, informational and managerial. The aim is to determine the degree of continuity of care between primary (PC) and secondary care (SC) and to identify the associated factors in Brazil and Colombia, countries with different health systems.

### Methods

Cross-sectional study by means of a population survey in Brazil (Pernambuco, n = 465) and Colombia (Bogotá, n = 609) in 2011. Users of health services of public health systems of each country were analyzed. Outcome variables: synthetic indexes on relational, informational and managerial CC. Explanatory variables: sociodemographic characteristics and health. Descriptive analysis and multivariate logistic regression models were performed.

### Results

Relational CC was higher in Brazil than in Colombia both for PC physicians (82.2 and 72.9%, respectively) and for SC physicians (82.4 and 70.1%, respectively), but the perception of a good information transfer (informational CC) is lower (56.3 and 67.6%, respectively). No differences in the perception of consistency of care (managerial CC) were found (around 70%). Among the associated factors with CC, the following stand out: in Brazil, age (elderly) and area (Caruaru, remote town) was associated with any type of CC. In both countries, poor self-rated health was associated with lower levels of relational CC and in Colombia, also, with clinical management CC. In addition, in Colombia, having at least one chronic disease was associated with higher levels of any type of CC and sex (female) with a continuous relationship with PC physicians and informational CC.

### Conclusions

The level of perceived relational and managerial continuity is high, and of informational continuity, low. Factors associated with the perception of continuity of care differ by countries and type of continuity of care.

### Key messages

- It is the first attempt to evaluate the three types of continuity of care in areas of Colombia and Brazil
- The understanding of the factors associated with the continuity of care will reveal which aspects of the public health system could be improved