Cardiovascular, respiratory, and total mortality ascribed to PM$_{10}$ and PM$_{2.5}$ exposure in Isfahan, Iran

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: Air pollution is an important environmental issue due to its proven serious impacts on human health. The aim of this study was to estimate the attribution of particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameters of ≤ 2.5 and 10 (PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$) in the prevalence of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and premature deaths in Isfahan in 2013–2014.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: This descriptive, ecological study was conducted to assess health impacts of PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ on the population using Air Q$_{2.2.3}$ software, suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO).

RESULTS: The results showed that the annual mean, winter mean, summer mean, and the 98 percentile of PM$_{10}$ concentration in Isfahan were 108, 100, 116, and 264 µg/m$^3$, respectively. The number of deaths per year related to PM$_{2.5}$ was 670 and that for PM$_{10}$ was 713 cases. The number of annual deaths due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases attributed to PM$_{10}$ was 316 and 68 cases, respectively.

CONCLUSION: The results of this study revealed that about 44.3% of total annual death due to cardiovascular diseases and 9.55% of that due to respiratory diseases were attributed to PM$_{10}$ exposure. In the other word, residents were exposed to PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ concentrations higher than the WHO guidelines which caused a notable increase in the rate of mortality.

Keywords:
Air pollution, AirQ software, Isfahan, mortality, PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$

Introduction

Air pollution is considered one of the most important environmental issues due to its well-known serious impacts on human health. In the recent years, health concerns of urban air polluted with emerging pollutants such as O$_3$, NO$_2$, and particulate matters (PMs)$_{2.5,10}$ are exist in both developed and developing countries.[3] In the recent two decades, epidemiological studies have shown that air pollution causes cardiovascular and respiratory problems, lung function defect, chronic bronchitis, and death.[1] According to a study carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO) throughout 1100 cities in 91 countries from 2003 to 2010, the greatest concentration of PM$_{10}$ was reported in Ahvaz and Ulan Bator (Mongolia), respectively, amounting 372 and 279 µg/m$^3$. They have reported that 11 cities in the world had an annual PM$_{10}$ concentration above 200 µg/m$^3$ and only some of Canadian and American cities had the concentrations <20 µg/m$^3$. Among of air pollutants, PM has particular importance due to its specific characteristics such as composition and size distribution. This pollutant has very high surface area and can adsorb a wide range of organic materials such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.
nitro-polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, heavy metals, pathogens, and radioactive materials. It contains very fine particles that penetrate to lower respiratory system, enters into the blood, and immigrate to the other organs even brain. In urban environments, vehicular traffic is the most important source of PM emissions. The WHO has reported that PM₁₀ can cause respiratory and cardiovascular diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, heart attacks, lung function reduction, and can increase mortality rate. Whereas, in some European cities, with increasing 10 µg/m³ in PM₁₀ concentration, mortality rate increases about 6%. PM can contribute in the prevalence of lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases. In Europe, PM₂.₅ concentration in the air of urban areas has been increasing, and some recent cohort studies have approved the relation between PM₂.₅ long-term exposure and mortality increase. Such studies have confirmed strong correlation between PM concentration and the number of hospital admission due to heart and respiratory problems. Similar studies have been carried out worldwide (China, Italy, Mexico, and Iran) to determine the short-term effects of PM using the AirQ model. Primary standards for PM₁₀, 24-h and the annual average suggested by the WHO are 50 and 20 µg/m³, respectively, and annual average standard of PM₂.₅ is 10 µg/m³. The presence of numerous vehicles in the city, vast deserts in the surrounding areas, and so many large industries in the suburb of Isfahan city are caused this city accounts for one of Iran’s more polluted cities. This study aimed to assess the health impacts of ambient PM₁₀ and PM₂.₅ exposure in Isfahan city and their attribution in the morbidity rate.

Materials and Methods

Study area
Isfahan city, the capital of Isfahan province, with a population of >1.7 million is the third most populous city of Iran located in the center of Iran in the area of 493.8 km². Isfahan has been situated in longitude 59°39'E and latitude 32°38’N with a height of 1570 m above sea level. In the age pyramid related to the Isfahan, the largest age group is 25–29 years old that is almost 12% of the population of Isfahan representing the young population of the city. The life expectancy for men and women in Isfahan is 82.52 and 79.9 years, respectively. Figure 1 shows the Map of the study area and locations of monitoring stations.

AirQ software 2.2.3 (WHO)
This is a descriptive, ecological study which evaluates the health impacts of PM₂.₅ and PM₁₀ on the population using the AirQ software recommended by the WHO. This software correlates air quality data in various ranges of concentration with epidemiological parameters such as relative risk (RR), baseline incidence (BI), and attributable proportion (AP), and shows its results as mortality. The AP in this software is calculated according to the following formula.

\[ AP = \left( \frac{\sum \left[ RR (c) - 1 \right] \times P (c)}{\sum \left[ RR \times P (c) \right]} \right) \]

Where
- RR (c) is the RR of health outcome in the target group
- P (c) is the population proportion of the target group

By knowing the amount of BI in the target population can calculate attributed value to population contract (IE) by the following formula:

\[ IE = BI \times AP \]

And finally, the number of cases attributable to the exposure (NE) can be estimated by the following equation by knowing the size of population (N).

\[ NE = IE \times N \]

One year data of PM₂.₅ and PM₁₀ concentrations (from April 2013 to March 2014) were collected from four air pollution monitoring stations which are located near to Ahmadabad, Eliaderan, Valiasr, and Azadi Squares. These monitoring stations are operated by Isfahan Department of Environment. The data were processed by Excel software according to the WHO guidelines. From April to September and from October to March were considered as hot and cold seasons, respectively. Then, hot and cold seasonal averages, annual averages, and their maximum, as well as annual 98 percentile for PM₂.₅ and PM₁₀ were extracted. The BI of the total deaths, deaths attributed to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases were estimated using death and diseases data obtained from health center of Isfahan province. In case of needs for other epidemiological parameters which were not available for the city the WHO calculated values were applied. Finally, these data were entered
into Air Q software according to the WHO guideline and parameters such as AP, IE, and NE related to PM$_{10}$ and PM$_{2.5}$ were calculated.

**Results**

Table 1 shows PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ concentrations as µg/m$^3$ in monitoring stations located in Ahmadabad, Eliaderan, Valiasr, and Azadi districts in Isfahan city. Total average concentrations of both PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ were the highest in Ahmadabad and the lowest in Azadi stations. The PM$_{10}$ annual average concentration, winter, summer, and 98 percentile in Isfahan city were 108, 100, 116, and 264 µg/m$^3$, respectively.

Table 2 shows summary of air pollutants and meteorological variables in Isfahan city. Table 3 shows the BI, RR, AP indexes, and total death numbers attributable to PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$. According to the Table 3, total death numbers attributable to PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ with BI 598.3 in 10$^5$ people with moderate RR were 670 and 713 cases, respectively. Table 3 also shows death number and hospital admissions due to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases attributable to PM$_{2.5}$ in the range of moderate RR. Death numbers of PM$_{10}$ attributable cardiovascular and respiratory diseases with BI 247.1 in 10$^5$ people and with moderate RR were 316 and 68 cases, respectively. The numbers of hospital admissions due to PM$_{10}$ attributable respiratory and cardiovascular diseases were 1614 and 623 people, respectively.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of days that people were exposed to different concentrations of PM$_{10}$ (A) and PM$_{2.5}$. According to Figure 2 for instance, each person has exposed 14% of annual days to PM$_{10}$ concentrations of 100–109 µg/m$^3$. While that the people of Isfahan have exposed in 23% of annual days to PM$_{2.5}$ concentration of 50–59 µg/m$^3$.

**Discussion**

According to Table 1, maximum annual average concentrations of both PM$_{10}$ and PM$_{2.5}$ in the Isfahan ambient air were obtained in the Ahmadabad station. This is due to high traffic volume and vehicle transportation in this area which is one of the busiest and big squares in Isfahan. High traffic is considered as a major source of PM emission. Minimum annual averages of the pollutants were attained in the Azadi station. However, the annual average of PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ concentration (64 and 108 µg/m$^3$) were 3.2 and 2.7 times greater than the WHO guidelines (20 and 40 µg/m$^3$) and their annual maximum concentration (202 and 491 µg/m$^3$) were 10.1 and 12.27 times greater than the WHO guidelines. Similar studies carried out in India, Italy, Estonia, and in some of Iran’s cities such as Ahvaz, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Tehran have reported the amount of this pollutants higher than standard limits. The elevated levels of PM$_{10}$ and PM$_{2.5}$ in Isfahan can be attributed to the increased vehicular traffic due to population inflation, high tourism volume, presence of deserts and mines, especially lead and zinc mines, and energy conversion sectors such as power plants and oil refineries around the city. Average PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ concentration in the summer were 116, and 100 µg/m$^3$ and those in the winter were lower than summer amounting 68 and 60 µg/m$^3$, respectively. It can be due to seasonally variation of the meteorological condition of the city which lays in the arid and semi-arid region, drought and reduction of vegetation, strong winds, and reduction of relative humidity as well as entry of dust from Western and Southwestern borders among spring and summer. The results of this study are in agreement with the results have been reported for Tehran, Khorramabad, and Ahvaz.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that a total number of deaths attributable to PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ with a BI 598.3 per 10$^5$ people have average RR equal to 670 and 713 cases, respectively. During 2013–2014, total cases of 10537 nonaccidental deaths have been registered in the Isfahan; so, premature deaths caused by PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ with average RR were about 6.35% and 6.76% of the total deaths, respectively. More than 800,000 cases of deaths globally are related to PM$_{2.5}$.[4] In Russia,[20] Estonia,[27] Italy,[1] and Japan,[20] 4%, 5%, 4%, 5%, and 8% of total deaths have been attributed to PM$_{2.5}$. In Sanandaj,

| Parameter                  | Ahmadabad   | Eliaderan   | Valiasr  | Azadi   | Total mean |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|---------|------------|
|                            | PM$_{2.5}$  | PM$_{10}$   | PM$_{2.5}$| PM$_{10}$| PM$_{2.5}$ | PM$_{10}$|
| Annual mean                | 93          | 155         | 64       | 107     | 57         | 95        | 45        | 75        | 64         | 108        |
| Winter mean                | 96          | 158         | 60       | 100     | 53         | 89        | 32        | 53        | 60         | 100        |
| Summer mean                | 90          | 151         | 71       | 118     | 61         | 101       | 57        | 97        | 68         | 116        |
| Annual 98 percentile       | 200         | 334         | 157      | 262     | 175        | 291       | 101       | 169       | 158        | 264        |
| Annual maximum             | 383         | 638         | 295      | 492     | 307        | 511       | 193       | 323       | 202        | 491        |
| Winter maximum             | 96          | 424         | 212      | 354     | 293        | 489       | 31        | 149       | 60         | 354        |
| Summer maximum             | 90          | 638         | 295      | 492     | 307        | 511       | 57        | 323       | 68         | 491        |

PM=Particulate matter
11.7% of the total recorded deaths were related to PM$_{10}$.[29] Similar studies conducted in Italy, Milan,[1] Tehran,[17] Tabriz,[23] and Khorramabad,[25] have shown that the number of deaths attributed to PM$_{10}$ was 1370, 2194, 368, and 320 cases, respectively.

Table 3 also shows the number of deaths due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases attributed to PM$_{10}$. The number of deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases with BI 247.1 and average RR was 316 people, and that due to respiratory diseases with BI 37 and average RR was 68 cases. Strukova et al. have estimated that about 46000 premature deaths in Ukraine in 2006 have been attributed to air pollutants, especially PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$. Within them, about 27,000 deaths were due to heart and respiratory diseases and lung cancer.[31]

In this study, deaths due to PM$_{10}$ attributable cardiovascular and respiratory diseases accounted for 44.3% and 9.55% of the total deaths due to PM$_{10}$. The number of deaths due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases was 1367 and 402 cases in Tehran, 612 and 114 cases in Ahvaz, 120 and 23 cases in Sanandaj, and 28 and 6 cases in Trieste, Italy, respectively.[12,29,17,31] The number of hospital admissions due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases attributed to PM$_{10}$ with BI 436 and 1260 was 623 and 1614 cases, respectively.

RR shows that the increased risk caused by contact to a pollutant which is obtained thought time-series studies. It studies the daily relationship among air pollution and health effects, such as mortality due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. In Isfahan, with per 10 µg/m$^3$ increase in pollutant values, the value of RR for the increase of total mortality caused PM$_{10}$ and PM$_{2.5}$ were 0.8% and 0.5%. Increasing 10 µg/m$^3$ in the PM$_{10}$ concentration caused an increase in the RR and total mortality by 0.74% and 5.24%, respectively. Recent studies in Europe have shown that 10 µg/m$^3$ increase in the PM$_{10}$ concentration has led to mortality increase by 6%.[9] In a study conducted in Tehran a mortality increase of 6.4% has been reported.[17] According to the WHO guidelines decreasing of PM$_{10}$ annual average value from 70 to 20 µg/m$^3$ can reduce mortality rate by 15%.[3]

The highest percentage of exposure days was for the concentration range of 100–109 µg/m$^3$ of PM$_{10}$. About 48% of total annual days the people have exposed with PM$_{10}$ concentrations more than 100 µg/m$^3$. Almost in all days of the year, the people have exposed with PM$_{10}$ concentrations upper than the WHO recommended guideline (20 µg/m$^3$). About 16% and 23% of people exposed to concentrations of 40–49 and 50–59 µg/m$^3$ of PM$_{2.5}$, respectively. In other words, each person of Isfahan on all days of the year was exposure of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations more than the WHO guidelines.

A weakness of the AirQ model is that it is not take into consideration the health effects caused by exposure to mixtures of several pollutants or their synergistic effects, but only the effect of pollutants is investigated individually.

### Conclusion

The results of present study showed that almost all days of the year people have exposed with PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ concentrations upper than the WHO recommended guidelines in Isfahan. During 2013–2014, premature deaths caused by PM$_{2.5}$ and PM$_{10}$ with average RR were about 6.35% and 6.76% of the total deaths, respectively. Deaths due to PM$_{10}$ attributable cardiovascular and respiratory diseases accounted for 44.3% and 9.55% of the total deaths due to PM$_{10}$ exposure. Therefore, the best available and applicable controlling strategies should be
carried out by authorities to protect the citizen’s health and to reduce the health outcome of exposure to this kind of PMs.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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