

ABSTRACT

The handling of food makes it prone to alterations in its composition, due to multiple opportunities of contamination in the several stages of the process from producer to consumer. Foodborne disease can occur when good practices of hygiene and rules of food safety are not respected. In this context, diseases caused by food are recognised by the World Health Organization as a worldwide public health problem. Like any other food, ice is a potential means of transmission of serious infectious illnesses.

This work intends to evaluate the microbiological quality of ice for consumption used in cooling beverages at restaurants and cafes, in the seaside area of the Porto city and also to evaluate potential health risks related to the ingestion of drinks with ice.

The study was observational, descriptive and transversal and took place in 14 establishments, with 23 ice samples having been taken for analysis of microbiological parameters. Of those samples, 26% presented improper quality for consumption. The more frequent parameters were Coliforms and Enterococci with 83% and 67%, respectively. Only one sample was contaminated with *Escherichia coli*. Statistical tests have been applied but it was not possible to draw any statistically relevant result. All establishments have been classified as “not acceptable” due to bad hygiene practices in storage and stowage of food items and the lack of structural and functional requirements.

One concludes that it is necessary that the Public Health Services intervenes in the vigilance of microbiological quality of ice for consumption. Specialised training of handling personnel must be evaluated so that a change of behaviour occurs. To the managing staff of establishments one recommends the implementation of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points system in ice producing machines and monitoring the value of disinfectant in water supplied by the public system.