AIMS: The aim of this population-based study was to assess the prevalence of subjects with diabetes mellitus by retrospectively analysing routine health insurance data. METHODS: This analysis comprised a 18.75% random sample of all members of the largest regional statutory health insurance (Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse, AOK) in Hesse. Patients with diabetes were identified by criteria such as ICD-10 diagnoses and regular prescriptions of insulin and oral antidiabetic agents. The data were corrected for the age and gender distribution of the German population. RESULTS: Over the 4-year observation period there was a continuous increase in the prevalence of subjects with known diabetes mellitus, from 7.24% in 1998 to 8.79% in 2001. After correction for the German population the last figure corresponded to a prevalence rate of 6.00% in 1998 and 6.91% in 2001. During this period, there was an overproportional increase in the percentage of subjects treated with insulin, from 1.49% in 1998 to 1.91% in 2001, while there was only a moderate increase in the percentage of subjects under oral medication and under dietary treatment, respectively. In the age group of 70 and above roughly 25% of all subjects had known diabetes. In this age group, more than 6% of all people were treated with insulin. CONCLUSIONS: This data suggests that there was a continuous increase in the prevalence of individuals treated for diabetes.
between 1998 and 2001 in Germany by approximately 5% per year. After correction for the total German population the pre-valence of diagnosed diabetes is nearly 7%.