

**Table 1.** Patients' characteristics, upon admission to the respiratory intermediate unit (RIU), for the 548 patients admitted during a period of 18 years (1993 - 2010).

	1993-1998	1999-2004	2005-2010	p value
No. of patients	170	271	107	
Age (years)	50.7 ± 17.8	58.9 ± 17.2	61.0 ± 17.7	<0.001
Men (%)	67.6	68.3	64.5	ns
Previous ICU LOS (days)	25.4 ± 18.8	32.6 ± 27.2	31.6 ± 25.8	<0.05
Diagnosis (%)				
Respiratory disease	49.1	33.8	47.7	ns
Cardiovascular disease	7.1	12.3	12.1	ns
Neuromuscular disease	13.0	31.2	16.8	<0.01
Miscellaneous	30.8	22.7	23.4	ns
Tracheostomy (%)	70.6	86.7	81.3	<0.05
Pressure ulcers (%)	20.6	45.0	46.7	<0.001

ICU: intensive care unit, LOS: Length of staying, ns: non significant.