

26-28 DE OUTUBRO DE 2020

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10º ENCONTRO DA DIVISÃO DE QUÍMICA ANALÍTICA

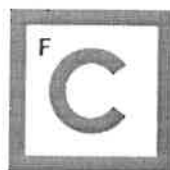
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Av. da República, 45 - 3º Esq
1050-187 Lisboa - Portugal
ISBN: 978-989-8124-30-2

DATA

Outubro 2020

CHEMICAL QUALITY OF DRINKING-WATER IN A NORTHEAST REGION OF PORTUGAL

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The chemical and microbiological quality of drinking-water should be considered within overall public health priorities [1]. A poor quality of drinking-water, due to insufficient disinfection or by human contamination, can be a vehicle for transmitting diseases to consumers. Thus, the quality of both raw water (surface water and groundwater) and the drinking-water has a strong impact on the public health. Among the contaminants, nitrates (NO_3^-) and faecal indicators (such as thermotolerant coliforms, *Escherichia coli* and enterococci) represents a major concern because these factors have been associated with adverse health outcomes [1,2]. This study analysed contaminants in drinking-water samples ($n=361$), including surface water and groundwater in the district of Bragança (during the year 2019), according the standardized protocols [3]. We evaluated the relationship of NO_3^- concentration with microbial drinking-water parameters (heterotrophic plate count-HPC and faecal indicators), as well as, operational parameter used to assess the performance of a water-treatment process (chlorine residuals and pH) [1]. The nitrate concentration (3.38 ± 5.79 mg/L) presented a significant relation with the presence of the fecal contaminant enterococci ($p=0.011$). There were significant differences ($p<0.001$) in regards to nitrate concentration between the water samples according to their provenience, such that groundwater presents higher concentration (mean varying from 4.51 to 6.48 mg/mL) than surface water (mean varying from 1.09 to 1.69 mg/mL). The results also showed that, beyond the presence of enterococci, HPC and coliform bacteria was associated with lower levels of residual chlorine ($p=0.008$) and pH ($p=0.004$), respectively.

The results suggest the relevance of chemical evaluation of drinking-water and the linking to the microbiological contamination and the operational control of water-treatment process.

Acknowledgements: We acknowledge to Unidade Local de Saúde do Nordeste.

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