Introduction: Despite advances in the treatment of malnutrition in pediatric hospitals, this remains a problem that must be recognized and to call the attention of academia and health authorities to be handled in time. Objective: To evaluate the nutritional status of hospitalized children at a referral teaching hospital in Manizales, Colombia and to describe the current prevalence of malnutrition. Methods: The study was conducted during the months of February, March and April 2010 at the University Hospital Rafael Henao Toro Colombian Red Cross in Manizales, Colombia, South America. We evaluated all patients admitted to a day of each month by calculating the Z score of the, weight for age, height or length for age, body mass index, mid-arm circumference, triceps and subscapular folds for children under 5 years and height for age and body mass index for school children and adolescents. Results: A total of 174 children (age 1-216 mo) were evaluated during the 3-days survey. There were 52.8% children less than 60 months old, 17.2% between 61 and 120 months and 29.9% over 121 months. There were 44.3% females and 55.7% males. Children from the urban residence were 83.3% and 16.6% were rural. The overall prevalence of underweight was 27%, stunting 22.4%, wasting 16.6% and overweight and obesity 6.3%. Males less than five years old were more affected than older children. Rural children were more affected than urban children. The prevalence of overweight children was greater in children 61-120 months than other ages. Conclusion: Given the observed levels of malnutrition, it takes up a system for early identification of children hospitalized with nutritional risk in order to provide adequate and timely support and prevent hospital-acquired malnutrition. This requires the use of previously validated pediatric protocols.

Keywords
Child malnutrition, Growth charts, Hospitalized children, Teaching hospitals.