Purpose To understand national changes in the quality of primary care reported by families of children and to estimate the potential benefits of recent health insurance expansions to children’s receipt of primary care.

Methods A comparison of three iterations of the National Survey of Children’s Health from 2003 to 2012 for children ages 0–18 years on measures of primary care experience (access, continuity, comprehensiveness and coordination). Trend analyses are stratified by insurance status and socio-demographics in order to assess the potential contribution of expanded coverage through health care reform to primary care experiences.

Results The results show very little change overall in primary care experiences for children nationally. Some significant gains were made in access and continuity for children considered more vulnerable (i.e., from families with lower-incomes and lower educational attainment), but were mostly explained by changes in insurance coverage over time.

Conclusion Insurance in the US remains a major factor in changes in insurance coverage over time.

Background and aims Acute respiratory infections (ARI) are the leading cause of death among children under five in Albania. This study aims to determine the parent’s knowledge and care seeking practice related to ARI in children less than 2 years old in Albania.

Methods A cross-sectional household survey was conducted on June – July 2012 in the northeastern region of Albania. 600 mothers of children 0–23 months selected using a multi-stage sampling technique were interviewed by trained health workers using a structured pre-tested questionnaire.

Results Knowledge: Only 8% of mothers recognised fast/difficult breathing as a danger sign of childhood illness requiring medical attention. 79% of interviewees were convinced that every child with fever had infection and 65% of them thought they needed antibiotics.

Care seeking practice: Of the 116 children (19.3%) who reported to have respiratory illnesses two weeks preceding the interview, 57.7% had an ARI. 70.2% of children with ARI were taken to a health facility and only 53.2% of them within the first 2 days. 63.8% of ARI cases sought medical care directly at the hospital bypassing the referral system. About 36.6% of cases seen by hospital providers were prescribed antibiotics compared to 11.7% of those seen by family doctors. 20% of mothers self-administered antibiotics to their children, suggested by community pharmacists.

Conclusions Mothers’ knowledge and care seeking practices related to ARI were poor. Community health education and strengthening of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses programme are required to improve timely and appropriate health care of childhood illnesses.