

## Graphic design

The graphic design of the present atlas follows the overall structure and characteristics already used in the mortality atlases for the United States (33), Spain (12) and Catalonia (28). The reason for this choice was based, primarily, on the extensive background work on cognitive and statistical research performed by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), which allowed various limitations of earlier atlases to be identified (32). In addition several modifications were introduced in the Spanish and Catalonia atlases of mortality in small areas, compared to that of the United States, as for example the format of the maps, the utilization of geographical units, the design of legends and the choice of map colours. Another advantage in the structure of the two atlases was the systematic use of self-explanatory titles, legends and ICD codes in all maps and diagrams. Even so, the Atlas of Mortality in Small Areas in Spain presents certain differences, some of which were already incorporated into the Spanish and Catalan atlases. Firstly, given the small size of most of the geographical areas, the maps only use smoothed SMR estimates based on bayesian statistical models, instead of the more commonly used non-smoothed SMRs. Secondly, given that the same type of mortality indicator has been used throughout, a colour scheme has been chosen which increases visual comparability of the maps. Thirdly, in order to separate young people (i.e. premature mortality) from the elderly, a widely used mortality cut-off point has been used (24) (34) (35); which is based on the creation of two age groups: under 65 years, and 65 years and over. Fourthly, the choice of leading causes of death was made based on a grouping utilized by the Epidemiological Surveillance Unit of the Spanish National Epidemiological Centre and which has been employed in several studies. Fifthly, details are included about time-trends in the relative mortality risk in the 2,218 small areas analysed, with respect to the overall trend in Spain as a whole. Sixthly, we included geographical distribution of mortality in census tracts of 6 cities compared to Spain. Lastly, with the aim of making the Atlas more accessible to an international audience, the text appears in English, as well as in Spanish. However, English-speaking reader must take into account that number punctuation symbols in map legends correspond only to the form used in Catalan and Spanish. Graphic design and image manipulation have been carried out using the Excel 2000, Freehand MX and QuarkXPress 7.3 software packages.