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Parents' Perception of their Children's Asthma, 2002-2008: A Community-Based Study

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Title: PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR CHILDREN'S ASTHMA, 2002-2008: A COMMUNITY-BASED STUDY

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Background: Childhood asthma is a chronic health condition that is one of the leading causes of hospitalizations and missed school days for children. It also affects the lives of both asthmatic children and their families.

Objective: To examine parents' perception of the impact of their children's asthma on several aspects of their lives by interviewing repeated random samples of parents from the Miami Valley of Ohio in 2002, 2005 and 2008.

Design/Methods: Parents of children less than 15 years were contacted in 2002, 2005 and 2008 using random-digit dialing to ascertain their perception of the health of their children as well as children in their communities. 1900 parents (650/650/600) were interviewed during the three data collection efforts. In addition to the study parents, about 230 parents refused to be interviewed for each of the three telephone surveys.

Results: Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents were mothers or female guardians, 95% had at least a high school education, 85% were Euro-American, the majority (59%) had a school-aged child at home, and only 6% had income below the federal poverty level. Overall, for the three samples, asthmatic children's parents were more likely to have a positive depression screen compared to non-asthmatic children's parents (24% vs 16%, $p=0.003$). The prevalence of parents' report of childhood asthma in index children was 10.2% to 11.5% ($p=0.45$). Parents from the 2008 survey reported fewer visits to the Emergency Department for their children's asthma (8.6% vs 20.1%, $p=0.09$) and fewer urgent care clinics visits ($1.1\pm.1$ vs $1.8\pm.9$, $p=0.07$) compared to earlier surveys. In addition, children were less likely to miss school due to their asthma symptoms during the past 12 months in 2008 compared to 2005 ($p=0.02$).

Conclusions: The results from this compilation of three cross sectional random samples (collected in 2002/2005/2008) of parents with telephones and at least one child less than 15 years old living at home in the Miami Valley of Ohio suggest that this area of the nation has a stable prevalence of childhood asthma that is comparable to the national prevalence, almost one quarter of parents of asthmatic children have a positive depression screen and the local community/public health efforts that emphasize the prevention of childhood asthma symptoms may be having a positive effect, given the reported decrease in Emergency Department/Urgent Care visits and fewer days missed in school.