Reviewer's report

Title: Temporal changes in the prevalence of childhood asthma and allergies in urban and rural areas of Cyprus: results from two cross-sectional studies

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Reviewer: Michael Anthracopoulos

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RE: Temporal changes in the prevalence of asthma and allergies in the urban and rural areas of Cyprus: results from two cross-sectional studies

By: Kolokotroni O et al.

General comments

This is a study of the changes in the prevalence of asthma, allergic rhinitis and eczema in urban and rural Cyprus, by conducting 2 surveys 8 years apart. The study is well designed, well conducted and well written, and presents changes in the prevalence of asthma and other allergic diseases for the first time in Cyprus. The authors note an interesting divergence in the frequency trends of eczema vs. allergic rhinitis and asthma, which is probably worth following with further surveys as it may offer hints on the differences between factors that drive the various allergic clinical entities in children.

The study methods are appropriate and well described, the results are sound, the discussion is well balanced and the conclusions are adequately supported. The study limitations are fairly discussed. The title and abstract are accurate and well on the point.

Discretionary points for revision

1) The authors ascribe the low participation of their second survey to the large number of surveys conducted these days. I believe that there is also a growing reluctance of people (parents in this case) to offer personal data these days; at least this has been our experience as well as that of others when conducting similar studies in the “Western World” environment. The comment may be worth adding.

2) I believe that parental consent is not necessary when administering a questionnaire that is to be filled on a voluntary basis; after all, if the parents do not want to participate they can just ignore the questionnaire (as, indeed, was the case with many of them during the second survey). On the other hand, the consent of the school board and/or the permission of the Ministry of Education are probably required to enter the schools; this should probably be mentioned by the authors.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.