Reviewer's report

Title: The asthma epidemic and our artificial habitats

Version: Date: 17 January 2005

Reviewer: Lennart Bråbäck

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General
The hygiene hypothesis as an explanation for the epidemic of allergic diseases in westernised countries is intriguing. There is a growing body of evidence that less exposure to micro-organisms has contributed to the rising trend in hay-fever, eczema and allergic asthma in affluent countries. As Maziak points out, however, this hypothesis could be too simplistic and it has certain shortcomings. Moreover, asthma is a multifactoral disease and the rise of asthma comprises both allergic and non-allergic asthma.

Maziak introduces the concept “artificial habitats” considering asthma as respiratory maladaptation to a complex of factors associated with westernised life styles. The debate paper is interesting and well-written. I have only some minor comments

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Reference 37: Add 2002;35:415-8
Reference 55: J Allergy Clin Immunol

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests