Reviewer's report

Title: Attitudes and actions of asthma patients on regular maintenance therapy: The INSPIRE study

Version: 1 Date: 23 April 2006

Reviewer: Neil Thomson

Reviewer's report:

General
Despite the availability of national and international guidelines for the management of asthma there is considerable evidence from surveys of individuals with asthma that many patients have poorly controlled disease. This manuscript reports on a telephone survey of 3415 subjects with adult asthma [INSPIRE study] and in contrast to previous surveys all subjects were prescribed regular therapy [ICS +/- LABA] and had a physician-confirmed diagnosis of asthma. The main findings were that amongst this group there was a high level of morbidity [51% had uncontrolled asthma, ACQ questionnaire] and that subjects adjust therapy during episodes of worsening asthma. The survey contains interesting new data.

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

1. Study population
The study population included more females (65%) than males. Is there an explanation for the discrepancy in the ratio of female to male participants? Did gender or smoking status (21%, n=714 were current smokers) influence any of the outcome measures?

2. Management of exacerbations
Although action plans contain advice to increase the dose of ICS at the start of an exacerbation, it cannot be concluded that this component of the plan accounts for the reduction in symptoms and unscheduled use of healthcare resources (refs 20 & 27). Furthermore 2 studies have failed to demonstrate any benefit by increasing the dose ICS at the start of an exacerbation (refs 18, 19). The Ferosi study (ref 21) refers to subjects taking low dose ICS and involved a five fold increase in the dose of ICS at the time of the exacerbation. Based on these data I would question whether the authors can conclude that subjects â€˜adjust treatment (ICS) in an inappropriate mannerâ€™. If believe the authors need to be much more circumspect about their interpretation of this aspect of the survey.

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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)

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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' below