

Asthma Patients May Be Accepting A High Burden Of Disease

(NAPSA)—If you suffer from asthma, you may be accepting a life filled with interruptions and restrictions to daily activities due to bothersome symptoms. According to a new comprehensive survey of asthma in the United States—Asthma Insight and Management (AIM)—adults with asthma surveyed experience activity limitations, missed work and school days and sometimes even fear the disease.¹

Asthma is a chronic lung disease affecting more than 22 million adults and children in the United States, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).² People with asthma can experience bothersome symptoms. In the past year, 11 percent of asthma patients surveyed had sudden severe episodes of coughing, wheezing, chest tightness or shortness of breath daily or on most days.¹

“On days when my asthma symptoms are at their worst, I find it difficult to be productive and feel very limited in certain activities,” said Ana Fernandez, asthma patient. “There have been several days each month when asthma interrupts my daily routine and makes it more difficult to get my regular activities done each day.”

High Physical and Emotional Burden

If episodes become frequent or severe, people with asthma may need acute care, including hospitalizations, emergency room visits and other unscheduled emergency visits. In the past year, it is estimated that more than one million asthma patients were hospitalized and nearly three million visited emergency rooms in the United States as a result of asthma, according to the AIM survey results.^{1,3}

Patients with asthma also suffer from the emotional burdens of

Adults with Asthma Have Had Poorer General Health In the Past Year, Compared to Adults Without Asthma

- Adults with asthma surveyed reported taking more than three times as many sick days and having more than twice as many days in which they limited their activities compared to adults without asthma in the past year¹
- Asthma patients surveyed reported a 33 percent average decrease in productivity at times of the year when asthma is at its worst, compared to a typical day¹
- Twenty-eight percent of adults with asthma say they feel a lot or some limitation in social activities compared to 14 percent of adults without asthma¹



the disease. More adults with asthma reported “often” or “sometimes” feeling fearful, isolated, depressed, angry or embarrassed than adults without asthma. In addition, asthma episodes can be so severe that approximately a third of asthma patients surveyed reported having an asthma episode so bad that they felt their life was in danger. One in five asthma patients surveyed reported they “somewhat” or “strongly” agree that they live in fear of hospitalization or an emergency room visit due to their asthma, and an additional 29 percent of patients surveyed said they “somewhat” or “strongly” agree that fear of asthma exacerbations keeps them from doing the things they want.¹

Progress in Asthma Management Needed

The AIM survey results reveal that asthma patients have low expectations for asthma control and tend to overestimate the level of asthma control that they are achieving. Additionally, physicians and health care providers often use terms that patients are unfamiliar with, such as “exacerbations,” which may lead to ineffective communication with asthma patients. For example, only 24 percent of asthma patients surveyed said they have heard the term “asthma exacerbation,” while 69 percent of family practice

physicians, 93 percent of pulmonologists and 76 percent of allergists reported regularly using this term when discussing asthma with their patients.¹

“The survey results demonstrate that too many patients may simply accept a high burden of asthma,” said Stuart Stoloff, M.D., AIM physician adviser and clinical professor of family and community medicine, University of Nevada School of Medicine, Reno, Nev. “Through education, physicians can help people with asthma understand current treatment guidelines and help them better manage their asthma symptoms and get back to the daily activities they enjoy.”

The AIM survey was sponsored by Schering Corporation; Schering-Plough and Merck & Co., Inc. merged on November 3, 2009. AIM is the largest and most comprehensive survey of asthma in the United States conducted in more than a decade. AIM surveyed 2,500 patients with current asthma 12 and older, 1,004 adults without asthma and 309 physicians, and was conducted to provide a benchmark on progress in asthma care since the last landmark asthma survey, Asthma in America (AiA), conducted in the United States in 1998.¹ For more detailed information about the AIM survey findings, please visit www.TakingAIMatAsthma.com.

References:

1. Asthma Insight and Management (AIM) Survey: Executive Summary. 2009.
2. “Asthma.” National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Diseases and Conditions Index, September 2008. http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Asthma/Asthma_WhatIs.html
3. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. 2008. http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/age/age_sex_2008.html