

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CHILDHOOD ASTHMA AMONG CHILDREN IN SELANGOR-MALAYSIA

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Background: Asthma, a reversible chronic inflammatory disease has affected almost 7 million children in the US. In Malaysia, the prevalence of asthma is increasing as it has doubled over the last decade. Socio-cultural factors are amongst several factors that could cause asthma. Thus, the need to analyze the above factors pertaining to the local population is vital.

Aim: To find the association between socio-demographic characters and prevalence of asthma among children in Selangor, Malaysia.

Methodology: We conducted a cross sectional study in July 2010. A random sample of 450 children were selected from those attending Selayang Hospital. The child's parents or caregivers were interviewed using questionnaires (modified from ISAAC) which contain socio-demographic characteristics (Age, sex, race, residential area, crowding rate, educational & occupation of parents). Data analyzed using SPSS 16.

Results: The prevalence of childhood asthma is 24% and is significantly higher among: Malays than Indian and Chinese (28%, 12.8%, 2.1% respectively) $\chi^2= 20.55$ and children living in urban areas (25.1%) than rural areas (4.3%) $\chi^2= 5.132$, OR: 7.356. No significant association found between asthma and: gender; males (24.2%), female (23.8 %) OR:0.975); employed mothers (25%, $\chi^2 = 0.314$); and mothers and fathers with tertiary education (31.2 %) $\chi^2= 4.112$, (32.7%) $\chi^2= 6.287$ respectively. Using logistic regression, no significant relationship between asthma and crowding index (OR=1.03, CI 0.379, 2.797) found.

Conclusion: Urbanization is a risk factor to childhood asthma particularly for the Malay race. Efficient environmental sanitation is highly recommended.