

Asthma hospitalizations due to poor inhaled medication adherence from the *Journal of Allergy & Clinical Immunology*

MILWAUKEE – The majority of hospitalizations for asthma may be the result of people not taking their inhaled steroid medications, according to new research featured in the December 2004 *Journal of Allergy & Clinical Immunology* (JACI). The JACI is the peer-reviewed scientific journal of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI).

L. Keoki Williams, MD, MPH, and colleagues from the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, and the Medical College of Georgia are the first to study the relationship between medication adherence and asthma related outcomes in adult patients with asthma. They examined the records of 405 asthma patients ages 18-50 to determine if poor adherence to directions for taking inhaled steroids resulted in poor asthma-outcomes. Researchers analyzed outpatient visits, emergency department visits, hospitalizations and oral steroid use.

The study found:

- Overall adherence to inhaled steroids was approximately 50%.
- Patients who missed one out of four doses of their prescribed inhaled steroid doubled their risk of being hospitalized.
- 60% of hospitalizations could have been prevented had patients taken their inhaled medication as directed.
- Poor medication adherence was also associated with emergency department visits and the need to use oral steroid medications, which are associated with more severe asthma.

Inhaled steroids have become the standard in the treatment of persistent asthma. They have been shown to significantly improve asthma symptoms and reduce asthma complications. However, adherence to the prescribed inhaled steroids is poor among adult asthma patients.

While improving medication adherence is difficult, researchers in the current study suggest that increasing education on the importance of adherence may result in better asthma control.

The AAAAI is the largest professional medical specialty organization in the United States representing allergists, asthma specialists, clinical immunologists, allied health professionals and others with a special interest in the research and treatment of allergic disease. Established in 1943, the AAAAI has nearly 6,000 members in the United States, Canada and 60 other countries. The AAAAI serves as an advocate to the public by providing educational information through its Web site at www.aaaai.org or the toll-free physician referral and information line at 1(800) 822-2762.