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Title: Asthma and asthma-like symptoms in Greece. The Greece asthma national prevalence survey

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Body: Background Asthma is a major health problem world-wide. Prevalence surveys of asthma provide valid information and help design national programs of health care services. Recent data are missing from Greece. Objectives To study the prevalence of asthma and associated symptoms in the adult population of Greece. Methods A nation-wide, cross-sectional, community-based survey of asthma and asthma-like symptoms was conducted, using a pre-tested structured questionnaire based on the ECRHS Questionnaire for adults. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 2,191 participants, aged > 18 years old. Data was collected with face-to-face interviews. Results The self-reported current prevalence of physician-diagnosed asthma and asthma-like symptoms were as follows: physician-diagnosed asthma 9 %, asthma attack 2.3%, use of asthma medication 3.7%, awakening from shortness of breath 22.3%, awakening from cough 24.1%, wheezing 19% and nasal allergies 23.3%. The incidence of asthma was calculated as 16 new cases per thousand people. Smoking prevalence was high both in the general population and in asthmatics (39.2% and 36.4%, respectively). Asthma prevalence was higher in Athens (10.9%), while there was no difference between rural and urban areas (8.5% and 7.8%, respectively). Conclusions The prevalence of asthma and associated symptoms in Greece is high, presenting a substantial increase from the last survey conducted 20 years ago. The results of this survey highlight the increasing social burden and impact of asthma in Greece and may aid policy makers and healthcare providers to plan effective health strategies for the proper diagnosis and management of this disease.