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**Title:** Knowledge and perceptions of asthma in Zambia: A preliminary report

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**Body:** Adults and adolescents visiting four clinics, representing different socioeconomic areas in urban Lusaka were surveyed from July to December 2011 with a standardised questionnaire. The research protocol was approved by the National Research Ethics Committee, and all participants gave written informed consent. Up to January 2012, data from 946 participants were collected. Mean age was 26 yr. old, 64.2% were female, 69.7% were living in high, 21.6% medium, and 8.5% in low-density areas respectively. The educational attainment of participants was 19.5% up to primary, 54.5% up to secondary, and 24.0% higher than secondary. Self-reported asthma symptoms in the last year were: 48.0% cough, 25.7% night-awakening, 19.7% shortness of breath, 15.8% wheezing and 7.7% asthma attack, while 6.3% reported using asthma medication currently. Medications used to alleviate asthma symptoms were mostly oral (antibiotics 40.0%, antihistamines 26.0%, SABA 24.0%, cough mixtures 16.0%, theophyllines 9.5%, and steroids 6.5%), while inhaled medications were seldom used (SABA 13.0%, steroids 7.5%, and LABA none). Many misconceptions on asthma were identified, with 45% reporting that asthma cannot be symptom-free and 59.9% that asthmatics cannot exercise or engage in strenuous exercises, among others. Finally, on asthma perceptions only 47.1% reported that hospitalizations for asthma are preventable, although 68.9% thought asthma symptoms can be prevented with medications. Overall, 64.2% of participants agreed that asthma is a serious health problem in Zambia. We conclude that knowledge on asthma and its management is poor. Awareness and medical education programmes would improve asthma patients quality of life.