

Asthma: Are We Missing Something?

By Simon Yu, MD

Asthma is a disease of the airway. It is characterized by inflammatory hyper-responsiveness with clinical manifestation of shortness of breath and wheezing. It is also sometimes associated with cough and chest tightness. Asthma has become one of the fastest growing causes of medical disability and morbidity for all ages but especially for the young in the industrialized countries.

Asthma may manifest as an acute attack or chronic exacerbations. The attacks are often triggered by: 1) exposure to irritants such as smoke, pollen, and cold air, 2) allergens, such as dust, mold, animal dander, air pollution, and petrochemical products, or 3) bronchial or sinus infection. Acid reflux, viral infection, congestive heart failure, foreign body or drug reaction are also common conditions associated with recurrent asthma. However, there is a large portion of people suffering from no obvious triggering agents or infections. These individuals are not responding to conventional therapy. Are we missing something?

Standard treatment for asthma typically consists of bronchodilators such as albuterol and corticosteroids in the forms of oral, nasal or intravenous preparations. There are many other forms of medications for asthma including cromolyn sodium, leukotriene antagonists like Singulair®, theophylline and the new generation of long acting bronchodilators.

Despite aggressive usage of multiple medications for the management of asthma, more than 15 million Americans are suffering. Over 5000 people die from severe asthma attacks every year. The total medical costs related to asthma are estimated at over 14 billion dollars. The overall rate of asthma and the resulting financial burden have been rising for the last 30 years. Are we missing something?

According to James Braly, M.D., expert on food allergies, wheat, milk and eggs are among the most likely foods that will trigger an asthma attack. Corn, soy and peanuts are also common food allergies that can exacerbate asthma. Food coloring and preservatives are also unsuspected triggering agents. Food allergy tests and a rotation diet of foods are essential parts of managing asthma.

Some of the natural remedies for asthma include nettle (*Urtica dioica*), mullein, ephedra, licorice root, cayenne pepper and intestinal cleansers to remove the mucous build up in the small and large intestines. Hydration with plenty of water is essential. Avoiding mucous forming foods, especially all grains and dairy products, is also critical to the proper management of asthma.

Two of the most unexpected cases of asthma in my clinical experience have been resolved by treating a hidden dental infection and a parasite infection. These two overlooked areas are a lot more common than you may think as causative factors of a variety of illnesses. In asthma, they can provoke an inflammatory response.

As an example, a 45 year old female developed life threatening asthma 6 months after she had a root canal procedure. She has been in and out of the hospital, with one crisis after another, for asthma attacks. She was not responding to medications or natural remedies until her asymptomatic infected root canal tooth was extracted. Another case involved a 60 year old farmer's wife with over 30 years of frequent severe asthma attacks. Two rounds of parasite medications allowed her to become totally free from recurrent asthma attacks.

Other alternative therapies to consider include acupuncture, acupressure message therapy, spinal adjustments by an experience chiropractor, and the Buteyko Method for controlling asthma. The

Buteyko Method was developed by Konstatin Pavlovich Buteyko from Russia. It includes training in a technique for deliberate shallow breathing and carbon dioxide regulation. It is worthwhile to investigate. You may also do an Internet search for the Buteyko Method for Asthma.

One of my favorite therapies is an injection technique called Infraspinal Respiratory Response (IRR) Therapy developed by Harry H. Philibert, M.D. from Louisiana. Asthma patients often have an asymptomatic painful area by the shoulder blades called the Infraspinal muscle. Injecting local anesthetics like lidocaine or procaine at the trigger points for IRR can sometimes invoke a dramatic response for asthma relief.

In summary, asthma has become a very common debilitating medical epidemic in the United States for all ages with increased morbidity and mortality. A significant portion of asthma sufferers do not respond to conventional medical treatments. The more we use bronchodilator medications or corticosteroids, the more side effects and mortality occur.

It is time for us to reevaluate asthma medical management. It is time for us to ask the question, "Are we missing something?" We must look far beyond common infections and allergens. Consider hidden parasite infestations or dental infections. Consider other forms of alternative medical therapies as mentioned above. Sometimes, the response can be dramatic and almost miraculous.

Dr. Simon Yu, M.D. is a Board Certified Internist. He practices Internal Medicine with an emphasis on Alternative Medicine to use the best each has to offer. For more articles and information about alternative medicine as well as patient success stories visit his web site at www.preventionandhealing.com or call Prevention and Healing, Inc., 314-432-7802. You can also attend a free monthly discussion on Alternative Medicine at Prevention and Healing on the second Tuesday each month at 6:30 pm. Please call to verify the date and reserve your space.



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