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Undertreatment of bronchial asthma in a nonselected population

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To the Editor:

We have read with great interest the article by Bousquet et al. (J Allergy Clin Immunol 1996;98:514-21). We are not in agreement with the conclusions of the authors that "this study is the *first* to highlight the magnitude of undertreatment of patients with asthma in a nonselected population."

We have previously published data on undertreatment of asthma in a nonselected population.¹ In our study we recruited, by levy rolls, patients with asthma ($n = 365$) from a sample ($n = 13,899$) representative of the population of young men (all 18 years old) living in four districts of the Tuscany region in Italy.

In Italy military service is compulsory and all men (also healthy subjects) are examined and undergo spirometry to determine whether they are fit for service.

In our work it has been shown that 18% of the asthmatic subjects with bronchial obstruction (all reported wheezing during the preceding year) were receiving no medication for asthma and that inhaled antiinflammatory drugs were insufficiently used. These drugs represented the treatment of choice in only 16% of the patients with bronchial obstruction and only 38%

of the patients with severe bronchial hyperresponsiveness to methacholine (all with wheezing in the preceding year). **1/8/87931**

Enzo Ferrante, MD

Physiopathology Respiratory Service

Military Hospital

Piazza Celimontana, 50

00184 Rome

Italy

Rodolfo Muzzolon, MD

Leonello Fuso, MD

Giuseppe M. Corbo, MD

Riccardo Pistelli, MD

Giuliano Ciappi, MD

Physiopathology Respiratory Service

Catholic University

Rome, Italy

Reference

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1. Ferrante E, Muzzolon R, Fuso L, Corbo GM, Pistelli R, Ciappi G. Bronchial asthma: still an inadequately assessed and improperly treated disease. *J Asthma* 1994;31:117-21.

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