

## **ASSESSMENT OF ASTHMA CONTROL AN ESSENTIAL & OFTEN NEGLECTED COMPONENT OF ASTHMA MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

Asthma is a common disease, affecting about 300 million people of all ages, gender, ethnic and racial background. Prevalence is rising due to multiple factors, including adaptation of western life style & urbanization. Low & middle income countries suffer the most. It is estimated that about 100 million more patients will be added by 2025. Therefore, the burden of asthma to governments, health care providers, families and patients is likely to increase globally in future.<sup>1</sup> Current guidelines set the goal of Asthma management as gaining & maintaining the control of disease.<sup>2-4</sup> Asthma control means<sup>3</sup> that a person with asthma has:

- No (or minimal) asthma symptoms.
- No waking at night due to asthma.
- No (or minimal) need to use quick-relief medication.
- The ability to do normal physical activity and exercise.
- Normal (or near-normal) lung function test results (PEF and FEV<sub>1</sub>).
- No (or very infrequent) asthma attacks.

Taking in consideration of these parameters various instruments have been designed to measure the asthma control. Review of literature revealed at least 05 validated instruments to measure asthma control. These include, the Asthma Control Test (ACT), Asthma Control Questionnaire (ACQ), Asthma Control Scoring System (ACSS), Asthma Therapy Assessment Questionnaire (ATAQ), and the Lara Asthma Symptom Scale (LASS).<sup>5</sup> All instruments are short, easy to administer and interpret. All these tests have been validated for their reliability and responsiveness to changes in asthma control and evidence supports their use in clinical decision making.<sup>6-8</sup>

Unfortunately, these tools are under utilized especially in developing countries. In this issue of Journal Sheikh Zayed Medical College, Javed Iqbal & colleagues<sup>9</sup> have studied the level of asthma control in South Punjab by using Asthma Control Tests. It is unfortunate to find that only few patients had fully partially controlled asthma as compared to a majority who had poorly controlled asthma. Rural & uneducated population had generally poor control.

The tools to measure control of asthma can easily be applied in our set up to document the control which is the first step to patient management. Treatment can be stepped up or down to achieve the control & maintain it. Although asthma cannot be cured but it can be effectively controlled in majority of cases. A well controlled asthma enables the patient to participate in school, work and other normal activities. They have less risk of exacerbations, hospitalization and higher chances of normal quality of life. To emphasize its importance among the health care groups, asthma educators & general population, Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) had selected the theme for 2013 World Asthma Day observed on 07<sup>th</sup> May as You can Control Your Asthma and sub theme is "It is time to control Asthma". Health Care providers should play their part to achieve the objective. Measurement of asthma control will ensure its correct treatment. Well controlled asthma should be made a global health priority. It will minimize the suffering of individual patients and families, reduce the poverty of nations and bring prosperity, especially in low and middle income countries.<sup>10</sup>

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