Comparison of Rhinovirus Antibody Titers in Children With Asthma Exacerbations and Species-Specific Rhinovirus Infection


OBJECTIVE. Human rhinovirus C (HRV-C), compared with HRV-A and HRV-B, has been associated with more severe asthma attacks in children presenting to the hospital. The purpose of this study was to compare the antibody response to each HRV in asthmatic children who had a known HRV infection.

STUDY POPULATION. Ninety-six children who presented with acute asthma exacerbations to the emergency department of Princess Margaret Hospital for Children (Australia) and 47 nonasthmatic control children were included in the study. Most of the ED asthmatic subjects (95.6%) required hospital admission for moderate to severe acute asthma attacks.

METHODS. Paired acute and convalescent plasma from 96 children with acute asthma were compared. Peripheral blood samples were obtained within 24 hours of presentation and stored at –80°C. Convalescent samples were obtained either 6 to 26 weeks after initial recruitment (median 12 weeks) or >26 weeks after the initial recruitment (median 34 weeks) at scheduled visits when the subject was clinically well. Forty-seven nonasthmatic control children had serum collected in a similar fashion. Nasal secretions from each subject was tested for HRV by direct fluorescent antibody testing and also analyzed by molecular typing assay to determine which HRV strains were present. Immunoglobulin G1 antibody titers were quantified with a dissociation-enhanced immunofluorescence assay.

RESULTS. Asthmatic children had higher antibody responses to HRV-A and HRV-B than nonasthmatic controls. The responses to HRV-C were markedly lower than titers to HRV-A and HRV-B in both asthmatic and nonasthmatic children (P < .001). Titers at presentation and after convalescence were not associated with the HRV genotype detected during the exacerbation.

CONCLUSIONS. Higher total anti-HRV-A and anti-HRV-B titers in asthmatic children show the development of heightened antiviral immune response. Low species-specific HRV-C titers in both study groups, even when virus was detected, suggest a possible altered, less efficacious immune response to this species.

Asthma Control Assessment in a Pediatric Population: Comparison Between GINA/AEPP Guidelines, Childhood Asthma Control Test (C-ACT), and Physician’s Rating


OBJECTIVE. The goal of this study was to evaluate asthma control based on Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) 2006, National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP), Childhood Asthma Control Test (C-ACT), and physician’s assessment (PA).

STUDY POPULATION. This prospective study included 527 asthmatic children aged 4 to 11 years recruited over an 18-month period at an office visit. Children with a chronic illness in addition to asthma were excluded. Both tertiary pediatric pulmonology centers and general pediatric offices were used.

METHODS. Demographic data, information on treatment, and number of severe exacerbations during the previous year were collected. Control was assessed using the...
following methods: (1) strict GINA 2006 criteria, (2) GINA without taking into account the exacerbation item, (3) NAEP criteria, and (4) PA, blinded to the C-ACT score. Children and parents filled out the C-ACT.

RESULTS. Mean age of patients in the study was 7.7 years (28% were ≤6 years), 78% had a controller treatment, 58% reported ≥1 severe exacerbations, and C-ACT was ≥19 in 29.5%. Control was not achieved in 76.5%, 55%, 40%, and 34% according to GINA 2006 guidelines, NAEP guidelines, GINA 2006 without exacerbation criteria, and PA, respectively. C-ACT was significantly lower in children ≤6 years (P = .002) or with severe exacerbations (P < .0001). According to PA, 89% of patients with a C-ACT >21 were controlled, and 85% of patients with a C-ACT <17 were not controlled.

CONCLUSIONS. This study found discrepancies between the various tools used to assess asthma control in children and in the impact of age and exacerbations. The cutoff point of 19 of C-ACT was not associated with the best performance compared with physician assessment. The determination of asthma control by C-ACT alone may underestimate uncontrolled asthma.

REVIEWER COMMENTS. The study supports the use of C-ACT as a supplementary tool in asthma control assessment but points out a problem in relying too heavily on this instrument alone. It provides additional data for consideration of varying the cutoff points for controlled versus uncontrolled asthma. Assessment of lung function, when possible, and evaluation of exacerbations over a longer period of time, may result in better assessment of asthma control.

Mismatch Between Asthma Symptoms and Spirometry: Implications for Managing Asthma in Children

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY. To examine the concordance between spirometry and asthma symptoms in assessing asthma severity and beginning therapy by the general pediatrician.

STUDY POPULATION. All children with asthma who were 5 to 19 years of age and were referred to the Spirometry and Aeroinhalant Allergy Testing Clinic at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center between 2008 and 2012 by a clinician participating in a study were eligible for inclusion.

METHODS. Spirometry testing was satisfactorily performed in 894 children whose asthma severity had been determined by their pediatrician using asthma guideline–based clinical criteria. Spirometry-determined asthma severity using national asthma guidelines and clinician-determined asthma severity were compared for concordance using weighted κ coefficients.

RESULTS. Thirty percent of participants had clinically determined intermittent asthma; 32%, 33%, and 5% had mild, moderate, and severe, persistent asthma, respectively. Increasing disease severity was associated with decreases in the forced expiratory volume in 1 second/forced vital capacity (FVC) ratio (P < .001), the forced expiratory volume in 1 second/FVC% predicted (P < .0001), and the FVC% predicted (P < .01). In 319 children (36%), clinically determined asthma severity was lower than spirometry-determined severity. Concordance was 0.16 (95% confidence interval 0.10, 0.23) and, when adjusted for bias and prevalence, was 0.20 (95% confidence interval 0.17, 0.23). When accounting for age, sex, exposure to smoke, and insurance type, only spirometry-determined asthma severity was a significant predictor of agreement (P < .0001), with worse agreement as spirometry-determined severity increased.

CONCLUSIONS. Concordance between spirometry and asthma symptoms in determining asthma severity is low even when guideline-based clinical assessment tools are used. Because appropriate therapy reduces asthma morbidity and is guided by disease severity, results from spirometry testing could better guide pediatricians in determining appropriate therapy for their patients with asthma.

REVIEWER COMMENTS. Yogi Berra once said, “It’s like déjà vu all over again.” I really think that this quote is pertinent here. For years, national asthma guidelines have recommended the use of spirometry in pediatric patients with asthma who can perform this maneuver. This recommendation is not always followed appropriately. In this current investigation, the authors report that even when clinical criteria for the determination of asthma are used correctly, spirometry testing has added value in management. Specifically, they demonstrated that the use of spirometry testing would have resulted in an assignment of a higher asthma severity category in 36% of the children in their study. This information can certainly affect the overall management of asthma in the pediatric population. So I hope I am preaching to the choir here in emphasizing that increasing access to spirometry testing, whether in the pediatrician’s office or through a consultant to a specialist, should continue to be a realistic goal to improve the overall asthma care for children.
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