



WORLD ASTHMA DAY 2011®

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New Tool to Track and Reduce Asthma Hospitalizations

Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) rolls out online survey on World Asthma Day

May 3, 2011 – Today, World Asthma Day, the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) is launching the next phase in its campaign to reduce asthma hospitalizations worldwide by 50% over the next five years. The new phase includes an online data collection system, the GINA Hospitalization Survey, that will help provide a baseline and benchmark for progress in the campaign.

The GINA Hospitalization Survey will serve as a repository of data on asthma hospitalizations across countries, regions, or institutions. The system was developed in collaboration with the University of British Columbia and will be housed at <http://www.core.ubc.ca/Asthma/GINA>. GINA is encouraging national, regional, and local public health authorities, government representatives, hospitals, and individual medical practices to add information to the database.

The goal of the larger Asthma Control Challenge, initiated on World Asthma Day 2010, is to improve asthma control for the largest possible group of patients, so that serious attacks are unlikely to occur and hospitalizations are unnecessary. “In order to meet the goal of the Asthma Control Challenge, we need to record the rate of hospitalizations in different countries and regions at the beginning of the challenge,” explains Mark Fitzgerald, MD, a member of the GINA Executive Committee and professor of medicine at the University of British Columbia. “We also need a way to track progress in reducing hospitalizations as the challenge proceeds.”

Asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases in the world, affecting more than 300 million people worldwide¹. It is characterized by recurrent breathing problems and symptoms such as breathlessness, wheezing, chest tightness, and coughing. Asthma symptoms vary over time, and also from individual to individual. Although asthma cannot be cured, it can be treated and controlled.

“Asthma control means no, or very minimal, symptoms, and very infrequent asthma attacks,” adds Eric Bateman, MD, Chair of the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) Executive Committee. “A person whose asthma is under control can go to work or school, exercise, and participate fully in life.”

“Improving asthma control and reducing asthma hospitalizations will also reduce asthma-related deaths,” says Tari Haahtela, MD, a member of the GINA Executive Committee who has conducted research on how countries and health care systems can reduce the burden of asthma. “We should think of every asthma death as preventable.”

The launch of the GINA Hospitalization Survey takes place against the backdrop of World Asthma Day, an annual awareness-raising event held the first Tuesday in May and organized by GINA. On World Asthma Day dozens of events in countries spanning the globe will take place in schools, hospitals, small village squares, and bustling city shopping malls, all with the positive theme “You Can Control Your Asthma.”

GINA was launched in 1993 to work with healthcare professionals and public health officials around the world to reduce the burden of asthma. The GINA documents are available at www.ginasthma.org.

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¹ *Global Burden of Asthma Report, 2004*. Available from: <http://www.ginasthma.org>.