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Judging Dept.

Tara Garcia-Collins

Student

EPI/BIOSTAT

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Karen Cummings, MPH

Dept or Program Years in program

Mentor

Work-Related Asthma

Author (s)

Tara Garcia-Collins

Work-related asthma is asthma that can be attributed to or made worse by exposures in the workplace, this includes work aggravation of preexisting asthma and new-onset asthma (Fletcher et al., 2006). It has been estimated that work related asthma accounts for about fifteen percent of all cases of adult asthma (Balmes et al, 2003). An integral step in the diagnosis of work-related asthma is recognition by the physician. A thorough history can identify the work relatedness and etiology, however many physicians do not make these inquiries and there is no correlation made between symptoms and the patients occupation. Tests such as pulmonary function, serial peak expiratory flow rates, challenge tests, bronchoscopy, and skin allergies, should be performed to confirm the diagnosis of asthma and help infer the association to the patients occupation (Youakim, 2001). As an intern at the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), Bureau of Occupational Health, I focus on the Occupational Lung Disease Registry which seeks to identify and improve employee safety in high-risk industries and occupations. The project entails: assisting in quality control of physician reports and interviews for the OLDR, reviewing case reports of work-related asthma to help identify high-risk industries, occupations, and exposures, and using the results of the data analyses to help program staff identify and develop outreach messages and strategies for physicians and health care facilities.

References:

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Fletcher, A. M., London, M.A., Gelberg, K.H., Grey, A.J. Characteristics of Patients with Work-Related Asthma Seen in New York State Occupational Health Clinics. *JOEM* 2006;48:1203-1211.

Youakim, S. Work-Related Asthma. *American Family Physician* 2001;64:1839-1848.