Prevalence Of Peanut Sensitivity Among Children With Asthma

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INTRODUCTION: The prevalence of childhood asthma in the US is increasing. Coexistence of peanut allergy with asthma could be a risk factor for increased morbidity and mortality. Also some asthma medications should be avoided in children with peanut allergy. Few studies are available assessing the relationship between peanut allergy and asthma. In this study we set out to determine the prevalence of peanut sensitivity among children with asthma who were active patients in a large pediatric pulmonary clinic.

METHODS: All charts of children who carried the diagnosis of asthma and who were actively seen in the pediatric pulmonary clinic at Mercy Children's Hospital in Toledo, Ohio were retrospectively reviewed for documented peanut allergy and the presence or absence of peanut IgE testing. Children were considered positive if they had a documented history of peanut allergy or a specific IgE blood test >0.35 ku/l. Children who had a positive test and who did not report a peanut allergy before testing were labeled as “unsuspected”. Data were analyzed collectively and by age groups.

RESULTS: 1517 charts of children diagnosed with asthma were reviewed; 163 (10.7%) had a documented h/o peanut allergy. 665 patients of the 1517 (43.8%) had specific IgE testing at some point. Of the 665, 148 (22.3%) had a positive test to peanut. 53% of these children and their families did not suspect peanut sensitivity. The prevalence of positive tests varied across age distributions but the prevalence of known peanut allergy was strikingly similar across age groups.

CONCLUSION: In this select group of asthma patients the prevalence of peanut sensitivity was high. Many children/families did not suspect a peanut sensitivity. We speculate that children with asthma might benefit from peanut sensitivity screening especially when control is difficult to achieve.

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