Asthma misdiagnosis is surprisingly common: The need for better screening

Recent report suggests that 50% of people diagnosed with asthma do not have the disease.

New Delhi, Jan 22, 2017: Evidence suggests that one in three adults diagnosed with the chronic respiratory condition, asthma may not actually have it. A study published in the Journal of American Medical Association stated that 33% of people diagnosed did not have active, or symptomatic, asthma and more than 90% of these patients could do without the prescribed drugs.

In the Indian setting, a study last year reported that almost 50% of those who were undergoing treatment for asthma were taking redundant therapeutic interventions.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement said that, “Asthma can be a very challenging diagnosis to make because all the patients do not necessarily exhibit the same signs and symptoms. Moreover the hallmark symptoms like difficulty breathing; chest pain, cough and wheezing are vague and mimic other disorders as well. There are many diseases whose symptoms resemble asthma like upper airway obstruction, viral infections, sinus infections, COPD (emphysema or chronic bronchitis), bronchiolitis and pulmonary Embolism to name a few.”

“Use of certain medications like beta blockers can also mimic asthma like symptoms. This is a growing concern in the medical community because the most worrisome potential harm of misdiagnosis of asthma is not treating the patient’s actual disorder. Physicians must make sure that they have the correct diagnosis before embarking on a course of treatment. It is in best practice to perform a number of tests to rule out the possibility of other diseases. Differential diagnosis should be the key in this regard and concrete diagnostic tools like spirometry and serial bronchial challenge should remain the gold standard for diagnosing asthma”, added Dr. Aggarwal.

The misuse of anti-asthmatic medications by such patients is linked to growth retardation, weakening of immune response and the subsequent high risk of respiratory infections thus, the situation warrants careful consideration. It is imperative that physicians remain up-to-date on recent developments in the field of diagnostics and tread with caution before making a final diagnosis.
Source:

- [http://in.reuters.com/article/us-health-asthma-adult-idINKBN1512HW](http://in.reuters.com/article/us-health-asthma-adult-idINKBN1512HW)

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