

# **Inhaled Corticosteroids Improves Asthma Outcomes in Singapore**

Dr Dawn Lim, Mr XS Wang, A/Prof BW Lee, A/Prof TK Lim, Dr Stefan Ma, Dr Jeffery Cutter and Dr SK Chew

Asthma has become a major health problem in Asia. The number of people suffering from asthma in Asia is similar to that of developed countries. Regular use of inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) has now been shown to be the cornerstone of treatment for asthma. Data from some countries have shown that use of ICS can decrease asthma-related deaths and hospitalizations.

The aim of this study was to ascertain if the changes in the use of ICS in Singapore has had any impact on asthma-related deaths and hospitalizations.

Analysis was performed using data from 1994 to 2002 in asthma patients aged 5 to 64 years old in Singapore. It aimed to compare trends in the sales of ICS with asthma deaths and asthma-related hospitalizations.

The results showed that from 1994 to 2002 there was a significant rise in the sales of ICS. In parallel, asthma deaths decreased significantly from 2.30 to 1.52 per 100,000 population. This translated to a decline of asthma deaths by almost 60% in both the young and the old. Hospitalization rates for both age groups also declined significantly with the average annual hospitalization rates decreasing substantially for all ages from 175.3 to 122.9 per 100,000 population. This reflected a 30% drop in asthma-related hospitalizations from 1994 to 2002.

The conclusion from this paper is that the increase in the use of ICS from 1994 to 2002 has had a significantly positive impact on asthma-related deaths and hospitalizations. The paper drives home the message of the importance of ICS in asthma. Regular use of ICS can improve the overall control of asthma and more importantly, prevent deaths.