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Exposure *in utero* and early infancy to toxic substances and association with asthma in Lebanese children: A case-control study

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Introduction & objective: Environmental factors, pesticides, detergent use, drug intake, alcohol and smoking are linked to asthma in children. While we know that these exposures are common during pregnancy, and subsequently during young childhood, the association of toxic substances exposure with asthma has not been evaluated. Our objective is to assess such associations among children in Lebanon.

Methods: This is a case-control study, conducted between December 2015 and April 2016, using a sample of Lebanese students from private schools from all districts of Lebanon. Cases were chosen from a specialized asthma center in Lebanon. 1503 questionnaires out of 1680 (89.46%) were returned to us. Verbal informed consent was also obtained from all parents prior to participating in the study.

Results: The fact that the child lives with a person who works with pesticides or in an area with frequent use of pesticides during childhood increased the risk of asthma significantly by 50% (ORa=0.5; CI 3.37-7.44; p=0.001) and more than 3 times (ORa=3.307, CI 1.848-5.918, p<0.001), respectively. Smoking waterpipe by the mother during pregnancy would increase the risk of asthma in children 6 times (ORa=6.11; CI 1244-30008; p=0.026), while cigarette smoking by the mother during lactation would increase that risk by more than 3 times (ORa=3.44; CI 1024-11554; p=0.046).

Conclusion: Asthma seems to be affected by several risk factors in our population of Lebanese school children across Lebanon. Spreading awareness by health professionals about these preventable environmental factors can help educate the parents and children to prevent asthma and its exacerbation.

Biography

Souheil Hallit has a Doctor of Pharmacy, Masters in Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Masters in research in Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmaco-epidemiology. He is currently a PhD candidate in Public Health and Epidemiology in Bordeaux Segalen University, France. American Board certified in 2 states (Florida and New Jersey). Part-time faculty member in Holy Spirit University Kaslik (USEK), (Saint Joseph University (USJ) and Lebanese University. Teaches didactic and experiential courses. His main research interests focus on asthma, allergic and atopic diseases in children, along with medical epidemiology, clinical pharmacy and public health researches.

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