

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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Epidemiology of Churg-Strauss Syndrome Among Asthma Drug Users

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Background: Churg-Strauss syndrome (CSS) is a systemic vasculitis primarily affecting patients with asthma, but its epidemiology is poorly understood. Our aim was to estimate the incidence of CSS among a large population of asthma drug users.

Methods: A retrospective study was conducted among patients who had been dispensed asthma drugs at three HMOs. Adults who received ≥ 3 dispensings of an asthma drug during any consecutive 12-month period between January 1, 1995 and June 30, 2000 were identified. Information on patient age, gender, enrollment status, asthma drugs dispensed, and inpatient and outpatient diagnoses and procedures was obtained from the automated databases. Chart reviews were performed on persons identified by combinations of diagnostic and billing codes indicative of CSS. A rheumatologist reviewed abstracted information on all subjects and those who met ≥ 2 American College of Rheumatology criteria for CSS were reviewed by two clinical experts. Each clinical expert independently rated the cases; disagreements were resolved by consensus. Cases classified as having "probable/definite" CSS were included in these analyses. The incidence of CSS was estimated overall and according to patient gender, age and calendar year.

Results: From a population of 184,667 asthma drug users contributing 606,184 person-years of exposure, 22 cases of CSS were identified (overall incidence of 3.6 per 100,000 person years; 95% confidence interval 2.3 to 5.5). Incidence rates did not differ by gender and age group. The incidence rates for 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and the first 6 months of 2000 were 1.8, 2.2, 5.2, 7.5, 1.4 and 1.4 per 100,000 person years respectively.

Conclusions: Results from this population-based study suggest a low incidence of CSS in asthma drug users, although the rate is higher than those previously published and most likely represents the lower limit of the true incidence of CSS as some cases of CSS may not have been identified using this methodology.