

## WORK IN PROGRESS

### Portugal

## Assessment of Functional Status of Asthmatic Children and Adolescents

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The purpose of this study was to assess the functional status and quality of life of children and adolescents visiting the Allergy Department of the Coimbra Pediatric Hospital, the only pediatric hospital of the central region of Portugal. This department is the second largest ambulatory department of this hospital.

The main objectives of this research, funded in part by the EC BioMed Programme, were:

1. to describe the impact of a chronic disease such as asthma on young patients' relations with their family, friends, and colleagues, at home or at school;
2. to compare patients' and parents' evaluations of well-being and QoL; and
3. to study the utility and acceptability of the tools used to assess patients' functional status.

The questionnaire used to assess functional status in this pilot test was the Portuguese

version of the Dartmouth COOP System for Assessing Function of Adolescents and Children<sup>1</sup>, initially designed by the Dartmouth COOP Project, Hanover, NH, USA, and translated and adapted by us.

Various authors have pointed out that using questionnaires with asthmatic children was a difficult task<sup>2</sup>. For that reason, the patients' physicians and parents played the role of special observers in this research. The parents of 114 children of less than 7 years of age, and of 140 children between 7 and 12 years of age, were asked to fill in the functional status questionnaire. Additionally, the physicians of the 140 children between 7 and 12 years of age were asked to administer the questionnaire to the children. Finally, 58 adolescents were asked to fill in the questionnaire on their own.

The clinical data, including indicators of asthma severity and the type of therapeutic

prescribed, were also collected from the questionnaires with a precious input from the physicians.

Statistical analyses are now being performed. Physicians, nurses and social workers are polled about the utility and accessibility of the instruments used. In the future, we plan to assess the patients' subjective experiences of asthma systematically, and to design other studies to evaluate the burden of this disease both in families and in school. •

1. Wasson J, Kairys S, Nelson E. The Dartmouth COOP system for assessing function of adolescents and children. COOP Twelfth Annual Meeting. Jan/Feb 1992.
2. Hyland ME. Panel discussion. *Respiratory Medicine* 1991;85:33-37.

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### Hungary

## Measuring Quality of life of Cancer Patients - Results and Plans

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The very first Hungarian article on quality of life study of cancer patients has been published just recently<sup>1</sup>. The QoL of 118 breast cancer patients during adjuvant chemotherapy was measured in a county hospital in 1990<sup>2</sup> using the Functional Living Index Cancer (FLI-C) developed by Schipper.

The main objective of this study was to explore the feasibility and impact of the inclusion of QOL assessment into the day-to-day clinical care of breast cancer patients management considering Hungarian characteristics. Our first experiences were favorable: the patients collaborated in filling in the questionnaire with great pleasure, the response rate was almost 100%. They appreciated our interest in their psychosocial condition. We measured relatively high scores in physical and social functions and low ones in somatic well-being and psychosocial function. The patients considerably trusted the

efficacy of treatment. Therefore we can emphasize the importance of communication between doctors and patients.

We are planning a longitudinal QoL study in different groups of cancer patients, e.g. breast, ovary and lymphoma. The instruments of this study will include the Rotterdam Symptom Checklist, the Psychosocial Adjustment to Illness Self Report (PAIS-SR) and the ECOG Performance Status<sup>3</sup>. We will also register the patients' medical status (tumor size). The questionnaires will be administered by trained interviewers on the first oncology clinic visit, and then every three months for at least three years.

This study will serve as the first step in introducing QOL analysis to numerous oncology patients in Hungary. The results can favorably influence the attitude of health care personnel. Cross-cultural differences will be

observed when comparing our data with results of similar studies conducted in other countries. •

1. Csepe P. Measuring the quality of life of breast cancer patients. *Lege Artis Medicinæ* 1992;2(7):654-657.
2. Schipper H, Clinch J, McMurray A, Levitt M. Measuring the quality of life in cancer patients: The Functional Living Index-Cancer, Development and Validation. *J Clin Oncol* 1984;2:472-483.
3. Morrow G, Chiarello R, Derogatis L. A new scale for assessing patients' psychosocial adjustment to medical illness. *Psychological Medicine* 1978;8:605-610.

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