Asthma may protect against autoimmune diseases

In this cross sectional study, data from the Israeli Defence Force database were used to analyse the prevalence of autoimmune disorders in asthmatic and non-asthmatic military personnel between 1980 and 2003. Of the 488 841 individuals enrolled, significantly more women than men had autoimmune disorders. When comparing all autoimmune disorders together there was statistically significant evidence that autoimmune disorders were less prevalent in asthmatics across both sexes (prevalence 137.4/10 000 in non-asthmatics v 93.3/10 000 in asthmatics; risk ratio 1.48 (95% CI 1.33 to 1.64), p<0.001). The study showed that there was a significantly lower prevalence of all autoimmune disorders except antiphospholipid syndrome in asthmatic women, and a lower prevalence of type 1 diabetes, vasculitis, and rheumatoid arthritis in asthmatic men than in their non-asthmatic counterparts. A follow up study tracing newly diagnosed autoimmune diseases showed varying incidence levels, generally lower in asthmatic subjects, depending on sex and type of autoimmune disorder.

This research suggests that asthma may affect the occurrence of autoimmune disorders depending on the disease and sex of the individual, with asthma generally being protective. The theory is that a T helper 2 weighted imbalance favours an allergic response that may protect against T helper 1 mediated autoimmune diseases.

J Woodard
SHO, Kings Mill Hospital, Mansfield, UK; jameśwoodard41@gmail.com
Asthma may protect against autoimmune diseases

J Woodard

Thorax 2006 61: 868
doi: 10.1136/thx.2006.la0225

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://thorax.bmj.com/content/61/10/868

These include:

References
This article cites 1 articles, 0 of which you can access for free at:
http://thorax.bmj.com/content/61/10/868#BIBL

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Topic Collections
Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections

Asthma (1782)
Epidemiologic studies (1829)
Vascularitis (53)

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/