Safety of long-acting \(\beta\)-agonists in asthma

The study by Wolfe et al\(^1\) certainly does not support our claim that serious asthma exacerbations are more frequent in patients receiving formoterol 24\(\mu\)g twice daily than in those receiving 12\(\mu\)g twice daily, or placebo.\(^2\) Actually, this statement should have been based on the review by Mann et al\(^3\) that assessed data from three prospective, randomised, placebo-controlled and double-blind studies of formoterol at different dosages submitted to the US Food and Drug Administration. The authors concluded that more patients treated regularly with formoterol 24\(\mu\)g twice daily had serious asthma exacerbations than did patients who had been treated with formoterol 12\(\mu\)g twice daily, or placebo (4.5\% vs 2.0\%, vs 0.4\%, respectively). In any case, evidence from controlled studies suggests that the use of long-acting \(\beta\)-agonists added to inhaled corticosteroids is safe and effective for the treatment of asthma.

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