

Do psychological distress and somatization contribute to misattribution of asthma? A Chilean study

Rona, Roberto J.

Smeeton, Nigel C.

Amigo, Hugo

Vargas, Claudio

Objective: The aim of this study was to assess the association between asthma and distress by whether symptoms of asthma present alone or are accompanied by atopy or bronchial reactivity to methacholine [bronchial responsiveness (BHR)], hence, to ascertain whether overreporting of asthma symptoms occurs in those with distress. **Methods:** We studied 601 young adults in four groups: those with asthma symptoms and atopy or positive BHR, those with asthma symptoms only, those with atopy or positive BHR only, and controls. The main independent variables were the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) and 45 physical symptoms to assess somatization. **Results:** The somatization score was highly associated with asthma symptoms alone and asthma symptoms with BHR or atopy, GHQ-12 with asthma alone and asthma and BHR or atopy related to a control group. After adjustment for somatization, GHQ-12 was not associated with the asthma outcomes. **Conclusions:** Excess asthma symptom reporting due to psycholo