

Childhood environment and atopic conditions, with emphasis on asthma in a Chilean agricultural area

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Background. An explanation of the etiology of atopic conditions based on the hygiene hypothesis remains controversial. **Objective.** To analyze exposure variables in childhood to assess their impact on hay fever, asthma, and sensitization. **Methods.** Data were collected on 1,232 young Chilean adults born between 1974 and 1978. Information was available on consultations for infections early in life, number of siblings, sharing a bedroom, nursery school attendance, and contact with animals in the first 5 years of life. Information on asthma symptoms and rhinitis were obtained from a standardized questionnaire. Sensitization to eight allergens and bronchial hyper responsiveness (BHR) to methacholine were assessed. The study design was non-concurrent longitudinal for infectious episodes and nutritional status in the first year and cross-sectional for the other outcomes. **Results.** Number of siblings was associated with sensitization only ($p = 0.0048$). Nursery school attendance was negatively asso