

Asthma in a University Campus: A Survey of Students and Staff of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores asthma prevalence among students and staff of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria. While asthma is widely acknowledged as a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in developing nations, data on its burden among adult university populations are sparse. This research addresses this gap through a survey that utilizes the European Community Respiratory Health Survey (ECRHS) questionnaire and spirometry tests to assess asthma prevalence.

Methodology:

- **Participants:** The study surveyed a representative sample of 2750 students (20% of the student population of 13,750) and all 1,428 university staff.
- **Screening:** The ECRHS questionnaire assessed symptoms related to asthma, including "wheezing or whistling," "shortness of breath," "diagnosed asthma attacks," or current asthma medication use.
- **Asthma Classification:** Asthma was classified as "possible" if participants reported one or more of these symptoms in the past 12 months.

Results:

- **Students:** Out of 2372 students, 2.6% (95% CI: 1.7–3.5) experienced asthma attacks in the previous 12 months. Additionally, 14.5% (95% CI: 12.5–16.5) reported shortness of breath, and 25.2% (95% CI: 22.8–27.7) had nocturnal cough. The proportion with "possible asthma" was 18.2% (95% CI: 16.0–20.4).
- **Staff:** Among 455 staff responders, asthma symptoms were less prevalent, with a "possible asthma" rate of 8.0% (95% CI: 5.4–10.7).

Conclusion:

The study reveals a significant prevalence of asthma among students, with lower but notable rates among staff. The findings underscore the need for enhanced asthma awareness and healthcare support within university communities.

Research Implications

This article provides essential data on asthma prevalence in an academic setting, highlighting risk factors and symptom frequency among young adults and staff. The information is valuable for researchers in public health, respiratory medicine, and university healthcare systems seeking insights into the respiratory health of academic populations in Nigeria.