Diagnostics in asthma

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Asthma is like love…

Everybody knows what it is, but no one could define it completely
Interest for asthma from an ancient time...

• Written documents about asthma in 3500 B.C. from Egyptian Empire.

*Asthma is a Greek word, means gasping*
Asthma today

- 300 million people with asthma in the world
- Prevalence of asthma is 50% bigger each decade
- If the trend in asthma prevalence sustains until 2050, it will be more 100 million new asthma patients
- Mortality in asthma 5/100,000
Damage of epithelial cell (by allergens, viruses, drugs, irritants...) activates secretion of cytokines, chemokines

- A chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways
- Many cells and cellular elements play a role
- Chronic inflammation is associated with airway hyperresponsiveness that leads to recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing
- Widespread, variable, and often reversible airflow limitation
Dammage in all bronchial levels

- Smooth m. hypertrophy & hyperplasia
- Thickened BM
- Edematous submucosa with infiltration of granulocyte
- Infiltration of bronchial & para-bronchial tissues with monocytes & lymphocytes
- Hyperplasia of mucous glands
- Desquamation of epithelium
- Mucous plug
- Vasodilation
Asthma definition
First part of the asthma definition—
inflammation

“
Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of
the airways in which many cells and cellular
elements play a role
”

Objectivisation of inflammation process in bronchi:

1. **FeNO**: Increased concentration of NO in exhaled airflow
2. **Eosinophiles** in sputum and peripheral blood smear
3. Increased level of **ECP** in serum
4. Lowered **pH** in exhaled air
Second part of the asthma definition – clinical presentation

- “The chronic inflammation is associated with bronchial hyperresponsiveness that leads to recurrent episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, particularly at night and early in the morning.”

- Anamnesis also:
  - cough more than 10 days without fever

- Symptoms of rhinitis ("United airways"), rhinitis could be early stage of asthma

- In each patient with rhinitis, we should search for asthma, because asthma is 3x more often in rhinitic patients
## Clinical difference of asthma and COPD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASTHMA</th>
<th>COPD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of disease</strong>: $&lt; 30y$</td>
<td><strong>$&gt; 40$ years</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breathing problems</strong> sudden and variable beginning</td>
<td><strong>Progressive and progredient</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smoking habit</strong> rarely</td>
<td><strong>Practicly always</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cough</strong> mostly at night</td>
<td><strong>Coughing out in the morning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$FEV_1 (PEF)$</strong> variable</td>
<td><strong>Always lowered</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bronchobstruction</strong> reversible ($\text{increase of } FEV_1 &gt; 15%$)</td>
<td><strong>irreversible</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bronchial hyperresponsiveness

**INDICATION:**
- Each patient with:
  - asthma symptoms, but
  - NORMAL lung function, and
  - NEGATIVE bronchodilator test to SABA
- should perform inhalation challenge test with methacholine to confirm asthma diagnosis
Third part of the asthma definition – **lung function**

- "These episodes are usually associated with widespread, but variable, airflow obstruction within the lungs, which is often reversible either spontaneously or with treatment."

- **Measurement of airflow obstruction (ventilation):**
  - Spirometry

- **Variable obstruction:**
  - PEF monitoring

- **Reversibility:**
  - Bronchodilator test with short-acting $\beta_2$-agonist (SABA)
Measuring bronchial obstruction - Typical Spirometric (FEV$_1$) Tracings

Note: Each FEV$_1$ curve represents the highest of three repeated measurements.
Example of positive bronchodilator test in asthmatic (FEV₁ + 54%, PEF + 45%, measured 21 minutes after salbutamol application)
“If you can not measure it, you can not improve it”

Lord Kelvin (1824-1907)
Peak expiratory flow (PEF)

- PEF correlates very good with FEV$_1$ (forced expiratory volume in first second).
- PEF correlates excellent with the degree of clinical worsening and respiratory gases.
### Classification of asthma severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intermittent</th>
<th>Persistens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily Symptoms</strong></td>
<td>&lt;1x week</td>
<td>&lt;1x day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Night symptoms</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2x month</td>
<td>&lt;1x week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEV₁ (PEF)</strong></td>
<td>&gt;80%</td>
<td>&gt;80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEF indications

**PEF Diagnostics**
- evaluation about the stage of the disease (GINA classification)
- bronchodilator reversibility
- is there variability of PEF values – PEF monitoring

**PEF Therapy**
- evaluation of *immediately* efficiency: is there a growth >15% after emergency treatment
- *long term* evaluation of efficiency: trend of PEF thought time
Peak flow meter models

- Most models are mechanical, today there are electronic models with memory.
- Technique for measurements are the same for all models.
Technique for PEF measurement

1. Sign on the scale should be placed on zero
2. Tube should be connected on PEF-meter
3. Maximal inspirium, instrument should be put in mouth, follow by strongly and fast exhalation
4. Display will show PEF value in L/min
General rules for PEF measurements

- PEF is measured for 3 times, while the best of those three measurements is recorded as the PEF value.
- This PEF value is correlated with reference value for a healthy average individual of the same age, sex, and height (common for the whole Europe), result in percentage.
  - Normal values for healthy woman is above 350 L/min.
  - Normal values for healthy man is above 550 L/min.
Bronchodilator test with salbutamol

- Each patient with asthma should have data of salbutamol reversibility in his medical history.
- PEF increase for 15% means reversibility = positive salbutamol test.
- A formula for the reversibility test:

\[
\frac{B-A}{A} \times 100
\]

- B – value of FEV$_1$ after 15-30 minutes of inhalation 400 mcg salbutamol.
- A – basic FEV$_1$ measurement, before drug application.
Negative salbutamol test

A patient with asthma could have negative salbutamol test (almost 20% of patients), because:

- test is not performed correctly (low dose of salbutamol, poor inhalation technique, not cooperative patient, didn’t understand...)
- the patient is under asthma medication, included bronchodilator, which is still acting (SABA, LABA, anticholinergics, methylxanthins...)
- the patient is in acute respiratory infection
- the patient has gene polymorphism with resistance of $\beta_2$ agonist receptor
- etc...
The best personal PEF

Three different ways:

• 1. The best PEF value during 14 days PEF monitoring during good asthma control.
• 2. The best PEF value during two years recorded by the patient on his own PEF meter.
• 3. Calculated PEF value from spirometry on the control visit to doctor, during good asthma control.
PEF monitoring

- Measuring PEF value during 10-14 days for PEF variability
- PEF variability is connected with asthma severity
- Even normal persons has PEF variability 3-5%, less than 10%
- Intermittent asthma (GINA I) has PEF variability <20%
- Mild persistent asthma (GINA II) has PEF variability 20% - 30%
- Moderate and severe persistent asthma (GINA III and GINA IV) has PEF variability >30%
PEF monitoring formula

- PEF measurements are two times (2 x) per day, in the morning after awakening (6-11 a.m.) and in the evening before sleeping (18-23 h) (always 3 times, the best effort recorded).

- **Morning** PEF in asthmatics **is lower** than the evening PEF values.

\[
\text{PEF} = \frac{\text{evening PEF} - \text{morning PEF}}{\text{evening PEF} + \text{morning PEF}} \times 100
\]

\[
\text{PEF} = \frac{\text{(evening PEF + morning PEF)}}{2}
\]
PEF in acute asthma attack

- **Evaluation of necessity for hospitalization:**
  1. PEF <150 L/min
  2. If PEF doesn’t grow for 15% after therapy

- **Therapy of acute attack:**
  - salbutamol inhalation with nebulisator 1 ml Ventolin solution +2 ml F.O.
  - Prednisone or methylprednisolone: 80-125 mg i.v.
Response to asthma attack therapy is fast!

1-2 hours after adequate treatment in asthmatic improvement of:
- Respiratory gases (decrease of PaCO$_2$)
- Increase of respiratory mechanics (PEF increase ->50% of predictive, or >200 L/min)

If response didn’t appear hospitalization is indicated.
Asthma diagnosis include identification of risk factors and triggers

- Respiratory infections
- Allergens
- Cold air
- Exercise
- Medication (Aspirin)
- GERD
- Emotions
For successful asthma diagnosis – essential both participants

• A PATIENT

• A PHYSICIAN
Allergens

*House dust mites *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus
*Tree, grass and weed pollen
*Animal dander
*Cockroach *Blatella germanica
*Moulds
# Asthma Insights & Reality in Central and Eastern Europe (AIRCEE, 2002)

## Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling Frame</th>
<th>Interview Length</th>
<th>Completed Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults with asthma and parents of children (under 16)</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>25 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with asthma (physician diagnosed and past year medication or asthma attacks</td>
<td>screening of a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>national random</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>digit dialing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sample of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>3.128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>3.107</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>5.225</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>3.713</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>2.453</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>5.576</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3.018</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>3.638</td>
<td>103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3.390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1.939</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>4.326</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of lung function measurement in asthma patients

- Only once
- Each 6 months
- Several times
- Once monthly
- On each visit
- Never
- Not in the last year
Unknown facts in asthma

- We have few cornerstones in asthma diagnostics:
  - Anamnesis (typical symptoms)
  - Lung function measurements

- But, even today, we have lot of unknown and unpredictable facts in asthma patients
Need for new asthma concept

Steven Holgate on World Asthma Congress November, 7th 2008, Monte Carlo:

*Invitation to all scientists to find new asthma concept, asthma is not just inflammation of airways*

Lot of work to do for all involved in asthma