

Insight and Outlook From IMS HEALTH

Every Breath You Take: Asthma in Canada

IMS HEALTH reports that, in 2000, Canadians made almost five million doctor visits for asthma – a diagnosis that includes mild, moderate and severe states. The number of treated visits has remained relatively stable over the last five years, averaging at 89% of total visits.

Although Statistics Canada reports more Canadian men than women suffer from asthma, women accounted for more than half of the 4.7 million physician visits in 2000. Whether male or female, a patient visiting for asthma is more likely to be 40 years old or less, representing approximately 62% of visits.

According to the American Journal of Asthma & Allergy, asthma is the leading chronic disease of children

in industrialized countries. In Canada, the Asthma Society estimates 10-15% of Canada's children (aged 12 or less) are reported to have asthma. According to Statistics Canada, asthma is the leading cause of hospital admissions among children. Looking at diagnostic visits by age group, IMS reports children aged 0-10 account for the majority, 22%, of asthma visits made last year.

With children spending roughly 90% of their time indoors, paying more attention to air quality by minimizing asthma “triggers” — dust mites, molds, environmental tobacco smoke — can reduce the frequency and severity of attacks, reports the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

Figure 1
Patient Visits for Asthma to Canadian Office-based Physicians

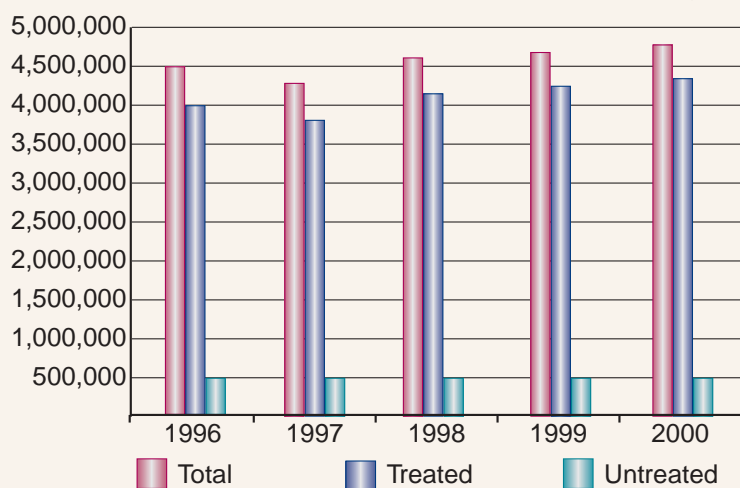
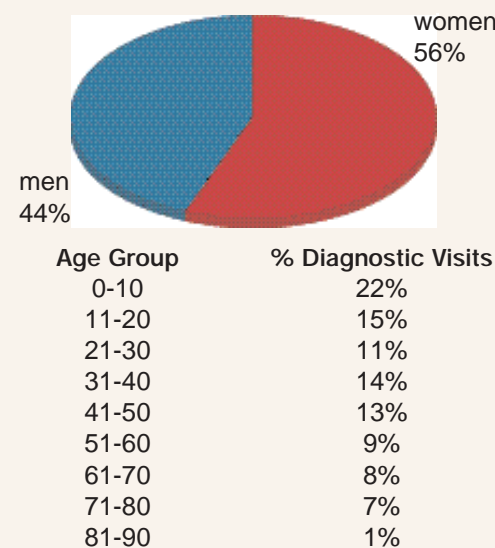


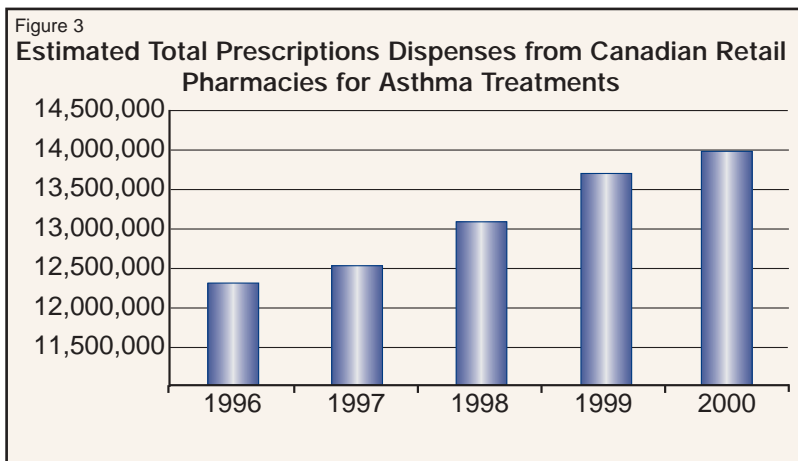
Figure 2
Patient Gender of Diagnostic Visits for Asthma in 2000



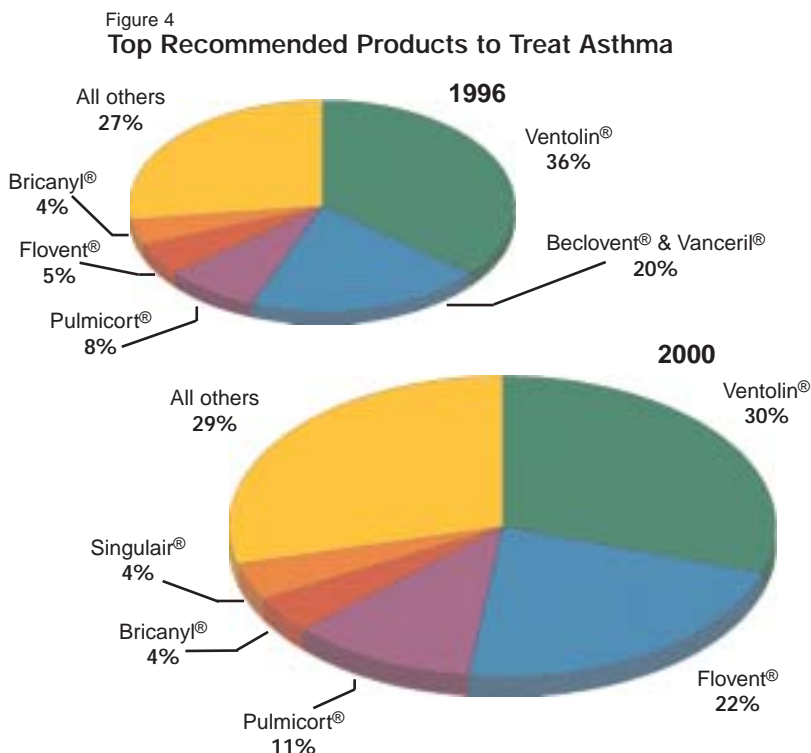
Overall, prescriptions for asthma therapies have risen steadily over the last five years, increasing 13% since 1996.

At present, the most popular treatment options are adrenaline-like bronchodilators (such as Ventolin®) and less frequently, anti-inflammatory corticosteroids (such as Beclovent®) administered via inhalers.

Since there is no cure for asthma, treatment has traditionally depended on medications that relieve the disease's symptoms. With the development of leukotriene modifiers (Singular® and Accolate®), which prevent the formation of the biological substances that cause airways to become inflamed, treatment may change radically in the future. As well, new research has identified the molecules (interleukin-13 and interleukin-4) responsible for asthma, meaning even more effective treatments are likely not far off. [CPM](#)



Source: IMS HEALTH Canada, Compuscript and CDTI
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