

## **Tobacco Use Common in Schools Demonstrating Poor Academic Performance, and Tobacco Experimentation More Prevalent in Asthmatic Children than Nonasthmatics**

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct. 29 /PRNewswire/ -- Students attending schools with poor academic performance ratings have a significantly higher rate of tobacco exposure and experimentation than students attending other schools, says a new study presented at CHEST 2003, the 69th annual international scientific assembly of the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP). The study found that inter-city children attending a district's lowest academic performing schools had a higher rate of tobacco exposure and experimentation than students attending other district schools. The study also found that children with asthma were more likely to experiment with tobacco and to be exposed to tobacco smoke than children without asthma.

"Tobacco use and asthma are more prevalent among poor and minority populations, most often found in inter-city areas," said lead researcher Salvatore Mangione, MD, FCCP, Associate Professor of Medicine, Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA. "If a child grows up in a household with smokers, that child is much more likely to experiment with tobacco. Tobacco exposure, whether active or passive, is a major trigger for asthma, and asthma is a known cause of absenteeism in children, which can, in turn, lead to worse academic performance."

Researchers from Jefferson Medical College examined the relationship between tobacco exposure and experimentation, and asthma prevalence among 6,727 middle school students attending 65 Philadelphia public schools. Of the students surveyed, 6,006 students attended schools managed by the Philadelphia School District (PSD), while 721 students attended the lowest academic performing schools in the PSD managed by the private organization, Edison, Inc. Overall, 23.7 percent of PSD children and 24.5 percent of Edison children reported having asthma. Among children with asthma, home exposure to environmental smoke was reported by 73.2 percent of Edison children and 64.5 percent of PSD children. Overall experimentation with smoking was reported by 31 percent of Edison and 24.1 percent of PSD children. Results also showed a significantly higher percentage of tobacco experimentation among children with asthma in both school districts. In PSD children, 24.1 percent of asthmatics and 20.5 percent of nonasthmatics reported tobacco experimentation, while Edison school children reported 31 percent and 23.2 percent, respectively. Children with asthma were also more exposed to secondhand smoke than children without asthma.

"Many parents and family members who smoke do not realize how tobacco exposure can impact a child's respiratory health," said Dr. Mangione. "School-based programs are needed to educate parents and children on the dangers of tobacco exposure and experimentation and their adverse effects on asthma and other respiratory conditions."

"Asthma is the primary reason for hospitalization and absenteeism in school children," said Richard S. Irwin, MD, FCCP, President of the American College of Chest Physicians. "With tobacco exposure as a major trigger of asthma, it is important for physicians to offer smoking cessation counseling to patients who smoke and to educate those who continue smoking on the effects that tobacco exposure has on the health of their children and other family members."

CHEST 2003 is the 69th annual international scientific assembly of the American College of Chest Physicians, being held in Orlando, October 25-30. ACCP represents more than 15,700 members who provide clinical respiratory, critical care, and cardiothoracic patient care in the United States and throughout the world. ACCP's mission is to promote the prevention and treatment of diseases of the chest through leadership, education, research, and communication.

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Source: American College of Chest Physicians