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Inhalation technique assessment and inhaler device satisfaction in asthma patients

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Background & Aim: Evidence shows that there is no statistical difference in clinical efficacy between inhaler devices, if used correctly. However, inhalers' efficacy is influenced by the inhalation technique, and it is suggested that it may be influenced by patients' satisfaction with their inhaler. The aim of this work was to assess the inhalation technique, the inhaler device satisfaction and asthma control in a population sample of a Primary Care Unit.

Method: Observational and descriptive study conducted between January and May 2015, in a Portuguese Primary Care Unit, with adult patients diagnosed with asthma and with a prescription for an inhaler in the last year. All the individuals who refused to participate or whose contact was impossible were excluded, with a final sample of 34 patients. To determine asthma control, the CARAT 10 questionnaire was used; patient satisfaction was assessed through a brief questionnaire; inhalation technique was assessed through direct observation, using a standardized check-list.

Results: 53% (n = 18) of the sample were females, with a mean age of 50.19 years. 53% (n=18) of the sample had their asthma controlled (CARAT > 24). Regarding satisfaction, 78% of the sample was very pleased with the inhaler. Almost a third (29%) performed inhalation incorrectly, and the most frequent mistake was "not to expire before inhalation".

Conclusions: Although the sample was very satisfied with the prescribed inhalers, it was found that only about a half had the disease controlled. Inhalation errors are also frequent, which might contribute to the poor control of the disease. Family Physicians - the gateway to the National Health System - must be attentive to asthma control, and should assess inhalation technique in consults frequently, in order to correct it and improve their patients' condition.