

Overview

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is the largest, continuously conducted, telephone health survey in the world. It is coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and used by Washington state agencies to understand leading causes of death as well as chronic diseases such as asthma.

The Asthma Call-Back Survey (ACBS) is a follow-up to the BRFSS survey. For the ACBS, persons who report ever being diagnosed with asthma in BRFSS are called back to learn more about their health and experiences with asthma.

In the 2006-2009 BRFSS survey, the prevalence of current asthma was 8.1% in the 41,935 respondents who were currently working.

BRFSS and ACBS data were analyzed to estimate the prevalence of asthma in Washington across 19 occupational groups.

Asthma in Washington State

Distribution of asthma by occupation: Washington State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Data, 2006-2009

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Key Findings

- From the 2006-2009 BRFSS survey, three occupational groups had a higher prevalence of asthma *from any cause* compared to the reference group:
 - Teachers and counselors
 - Administrative support workers, including clerical workers
 - Health service workers (e.g. nursing aides, orderlies)
- From the Asthma Call Back Survey (ACBS), several occupational groups had a higher prevalence of asthma *from work* compared to the reference group:
 - Farming, forestry, and fishing
 - Construction
 - Mechanics, precision production, and plant operators
- Half of the 2,511 ACBS respondents indicated that their asthma was caused or worsened by exposure at work; but only 10.7% spoke with a health-care professional about this.

Impact

Clinicians should recognize the widespread nature of work-related asthma, and the importance of occupation. There is a communication gap between workers with asthma and healthcare providers.

Download the free article here:

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