

Publication

Gender differences in adult-onset asthma: results from the Swiss SAPAL-DIA cohort study

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A higher incidence of asthma is reported in women compared with men, but evidence in later adulthood is limited. We aimed to determine the 20-year cumulative incidence of adult asthma in Switzerland and its relation to sex, taking into account age and allergic sensitisation. We assessed incidence of self-report of doctor-diagnosed asthma between 1991/1992 and 2010/2011 in 5128 subjects without asthma, aged 18-60 years at baseline. The age-related probability of asthma onset was analysed by logistic regression adjusting for potential confounders and stratified by sex and allergic sensitisation at baseline. Over 20 years, 128 (5.1%) men and 198 (7.5%) women newly reported doctor-diagnosed asthma. The adjusted odds ratio for female sex was 1.99 (95% CI 1.54-2.57) overall, 3.21 (95% CI 2.12-4.85) among nonsensitised subjects, and 1.43 (95% CI 1.02-2.02) in sensitised subjects. The probability of asthma onset decreased with increasing baseline age in women but not in men. The higher probability of new asthma in sensitised compared with nonsensitised men was unrelated to age, whereas in women it decreased with age. Asthma incidence was higher in women than in men but decreased with increasing age. The female predominance was considerably stronger in nonsensitised adults compared with those with allergic sensitisation.

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