

Acute Asthma Management in a Tertiary Hospital in Oman

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Received: 16 November 2023

Accepted: 12 May 2024

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DOI 10.5001/omj.2024.93

Abstract

Objectives: The quality of asthma management in tertiary hospitals' emergency departments (EDs) is key to sustained asthma control. We assessed the quality of asthma care and adherence to guidelines at the Royal Hospital (RH) in Oman.

Methods: This retrospective, observational study examined the medical records of asthma patients who presented to the ED of the RH between 1 June 2014 and 1 June 2016.

Results: A total of 217 patients were included in the study. Lack of proper documentation was observed throughout the study. Only 80 patients (36.9% of 134 available records) were on controller therapy, and only 51 of them patients were reported to be compliant to controller therapy. No asthma severity assessment was conducted, and 57 (32.9%) patients experienced respiratory distress. Peak expiratory flow rate measurements were not performed for all patients; chest X-ray was performed for 145 (66.8%) patients, and blood gas analysis for 83 (38.2%). The mean (SD) time from the initial assessment to the initiation of treatment was 12.0 (11.0) minutes. Systemic steroids and nebulizers were used for initial management in 70.5% (n = 153) and 96.3% (n = 209) of patients, respectively. Reassessments at one hour and two hours following initial assessment were not done to all patients; reassessment records were missing for 50 patients (54.9%) after the first hour, and an additional 50 patients after the second hour. Out of the total sample, 45 patients (20.7%) required hospital admission, with the majority (93.3%) being admitted to the medical ward. Post-discharge procedures recommended by guidelines were rarely employed.

Conclusion: There is a serious lack of adherence to asthma management guidelines in the ED. The 2009 Omani Ministry of Health guidelines should be updated, considering recent updates of Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) strategies, adopted as the standard of care, and disseminated with regular monitoring to ensure compliance.

Keywords: Asthma, Acute Asthma Management, Emergency Departments, Oman.

Introduction

The prevalence of asthma among adults in Oman was estimated to be approximately 7.3% in 2013; of those, 54% had poorly controlled asthma.¹ This poor control usually translates into greater frequencies of asthma-related visits to the emergency department (ED). In 2008, the frequencies of asthma-related hospitalizations and ED visits reported by Oman were 30% and 58%, respectively.^{2,3}

The annual updates of the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) guidelines are widely available for health care professionals; they are also translated into many languages, including Arabic, to ensure accessibility. Numerous assessment and management algorithms are developed according to these guidelines to facilitate their implementation.

However, international audits have indicated a major discrepancy between the standard of current medical management of acute asthma in hospitals and that recommended in the guidelines.^{4,5}

Numerous studies have revealed that common issues in asthma management include poor adherence to published guidelines, inadequate assessment and recognition of severity, and confusion over the use and interpretation of investigations. Other problems in asthma management include infrequent measurement of the peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR), insufficient use of systemic corticosteroids, overreliance on bronchodilators, a delayed decision for pulmonologist referral or ICU admission, and poor follow-up arrangements.⁶⁻¹⁵

In 2009, the Omani Ministry of Health released a national guideline for the management of asthma referencing the 2008 GINA guidelines and the British Thoracic Society Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (BTS/SIG).¹⁶ Nonetheless, in the Royal Hospital (RH) in Muscat, no guidelines are designated in the computerized system in the ED for the management of acute asthma. Furthermore, no national audit of acute asthma management in the ED of a tertiary healthcare center has been undertaken in Oman.

Assessment of the quality of asthma care in developing countries is imperative because of the increasing prevalence of this disease, the large associated socioeconomic and psychosocial burdens, and the lack of treatment, which leaves much room for improvement.⁴ Therefore, we aimed to determine the current medical management of acute asthma in tertiary hospitals in Oman and whether it is at the standard recommended by the GINA 2017¹⁷ and BTS/SIG guidelines and evidence-based recommendations.

Methods

This retrospective, observational, single-center study assessed clinical evaluation and management procedures for acute asthma in the ED in the RH between 1 June 2014 and 1 June 2016.

Cases were identified through a review of charts in the Al-Shifa Healthcare Information System (HIS) in the RH in 2017. The included patients were of Omani nationality, 13 years old and above, were diagnosed with asthma, and presented to the ED in the RH with acute asthma between 1 June 2014 and 1 June 2016. Patients with a known history of COPD, congestive heart failure, bronchiectasis, no history of asthma, interstitial lung disease, or obesity hypoventilation syndrome/obstructive sleep apnea were excluded.

The case report form was generated using information adapted from GINA 2017 and BTS/SIG guidelines on managing acute asthmatic exacerbations.

The data collected included demographics, medical history, pharmacological management, and follow-up arrangements for discharged patients. Information on the clinical evaluation procedures was also recorded, particularly the use of PEFR measurements, chest X-ray (CXR), and arterial blood gas (ABG) in asthma severity assessment and management.

For CXR interpretation, an abnormal CXR finding was defined as opacification (patchy, diffuse [bilateral], or lobar consistent with infection) or air leakage, such as pneumothorax or pneumomediastinum. Hyperinflation, stable granulomas, or bronchial wall thickening were not considered clinically significant abnormalities.¹⁸

The data were entered into the Epidata entry client and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS, PC Version 22).

The study was approved by the institutional ethics committee of the RH in Oman. All research was completed in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki. As this was a retrospective study of historically routinely observed information from clinical practice, no informed consent was needed. All the data were documented anonymously and safely stored to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the patients' data throughout the study.

Results

A total of 446 patients showing symptoms of acute asthma attack presented to the ED at the RH between 1 June, 2014, and 1 June, 2016. Of those, 217 met the eligibility criteria and were included in our study. The mean (standard deviation; SD) age was 41.0 (17.4) years. Males constituted 30.9% (n = 67) of the study population, and 68.2% (n = 148) were residents of Muscat, the capital of Oman.

Only 7.8% (n = 17) of the study population had their smoking status recorded. Of those, only 2 were active smokers. Among 134 patients with available information about controller therapy, 80 (36.9%) patients were receiving controller therapy, mainly long-acting beta agonist (LABA) therapy (n = 64; 81%). Of the 127 patients whose records included information about compliance with controller therapy, 51 (40.2%) patients were compliant. In addition, 53 (24.4%) patients only received rescue therapy [Table 1].

Table 1: Demographics and baseline characteristics of the study population (N=217).

Variable (N = 217)	n (%)
Age (years) – mean (SD)	41.0 (17.4)
Gender	
Male	67 (30.9)
Female	150 (69.1)
Region (n=216)	
Muscat	148 (68.2)
Al Dhakhiliyah	12 (5.5)
Al Dhahirah	2 (0.9)
Al Batinah North	13 (6.0)
Al Batinah South	16 (7.4)
Al Buraimi	1 (0.5)
Al Wusta	2 (0.9)
Al Sharqiyah North	8 (3.7)
Al Sharqiyah South	7 (3.2)
Dhofar	7 (3.2)
Smoking status (n=17)	
Unknown smoking status	200 (92.2)
Documented smoking status	17 (7.8)
Active smoker	2 (11.8)
Past smoker	4 (23.5)
Non-smoker	11 (64.7)
Information about current controller therapy available? (n=217)	
Yes	134 (61.8)
No	83 (38.2)
If yes, is the patient on controller therapy (inhaled corticosteroids)? (n=134)	
Yes	80 (36.9)
No	55 (25.3)
Controller therapy taken in combination with... (n=80)	
LABA	64 (81)
LAMA	6 (7.5)
LTRA	15 (18.8)
MX	12 (15)
Oral steroid	0 (0)
Omalizumab	0 (0)
Information about compliance to controller therapy available? (n=217)	
Yes	127 (58.5)
No	90 (41.5)
If yes, is the patient compliant to controller therapy? (n=127)	
Compliant	51 (40.2)
Non-compliant	76 (59.8)

LABA; long-acting beta agonist, LAMA; long-acting muscarinic antagonists; LTRA; leukotriene receptor antagonist, MX; methyl xanthine

Across the total population, the mean body temperature was 36.8 (0.7)°C, and only 5.5% (n = 12) of the patients had a fever, defined as an axillary temperature of 38°C or above. The mean respiratory rate was 20.3 (3.2) breaths/minute, the mean oxygen saturation level was 96.6 (3.7%), and the mean heart rate was 100.6 (20.8) beats/minute.

A total of 173 patient records contained information regarding respiratory distress; 57 (32.9%) of these patients experienced respiratory distress. Respiratory distress was mainly assessed clinically, with no mention of severity in the records. Additionally, none of the records had documented PEFR measurements before or during the ED visit.

A total of 145 (66.8%) patients underwent CXR, and 6.9% of those (n = 10) showed evidence of opacification. Blood gas analysis was performed for 83 (38.2%) patients. The mean PaCO₂ was 83 (38.2) mmHg, 33 (39.8%) had normal PaCO₂ (defined as 35 to 45 mmHg), and 16.5% had hypercapnia (defined as PaCO₂ > 45 mmHg). The mean PaO₂ was 56.1 (25.8) mmHg, and the mean pH was 7.4 (0.49). More details on the initial assessments performed in the ED and their clinical findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Clinical presentation on initial assessments.

Variable (N = 217)	n (%)
Vital signs on initial assessment	
Temperature (°C) – mean (SD)	36.8 (0.7)
Heart rate (beats/min) – mean (SD)	100.6 (20.8)
Respiratory rate (breaths/min) – mean (SD)	20.3 (3.2)
Respiratory distress (n=173)	57 (32.9)
Oxygen saturation (%) – mean (SD)	96.6 (3.7)
Assessments done during the ED visit (n=217)	
CXR	145 (66.8)
Collection of blood gases	83 (38.2)
Arterial blood gases analysis	44 (53)
Venous blood gases analysis	39 (47)
Assessments results	
Opacification on CXR (n=145)	10 (6.9)
PaCO ₂ (mmHg) – mean (SD)	37.2 (8.0)
PaO ₂ (mmHg) – mean (SD)	56.1 (25.8)
Hypoxemia (spO ₂ < 90%) (n=83)	6 (7.3)
Normal PaCO ₂ (35-45 mmHg) (n=83)	33 (39.8)
Hypercapnia (PaCO ₂ > 45 mmHg) (n=83)	14 (16.9)
pH (n=217) – mean (SD)	7.4 (0.49)
Acidosis (pH < 7.35) (n=83)	5 (6.0)

SD; standard deviation, ED; emergency department, CXR; chest X-ray, PaCO₂; partial pressure of carbon dioxide, SpO₂; saturation of peripheral oxygen

Patients waited for a mean of 3.9 (6.4) hours before presenting to the ED. However, the time from initial assessment to starting management was 12.0 (11.0) minutes. Upon initial assessment, 70.5% (n = 153) of the patients received systemic steroids, while 96.3% (n = 209) received nebulizers. Of the latter, 87.6% (n = 183) received a combination therapy of nebulized short-acting beta agonists (SABA) plus short-acting muscarinic antagonists (SAMA). Patients who did not receive SABA at the initial assessment (n = 15, 6.9%) received it in the first hour (n = 2), second hour (n = 3), or at the final assessment (n = 1). Patients who did not receive systemic steroids at the initial assessment (n = 64; 29.5%) were administered this treatment mainly within the first hour (n = 10). Other medications given in the ED included antibiotics (n = 42; 19.3%) and magnesium sulfate (n = 19; 8.8%).

Patients requiring respiratory support were either provided high-flow nasal cannula (HFNC) oxygen therapy (n = 40; 18.4%) or noninvasive ventilation (NIV) (n = 4; 1.8%). More information on the characteristics of patients receiving either respiratory support or the management of acute asthma in the ED is shown in Table 3. The level of

documentation of reassessment after initial assessment and management was poor. Fifty patients (54.9%) had no reassessment records at 1 hour, another 50 had no reassessment documentation at 2 hours, and 3 (3.2%) had no reassessment documentation at the final assessment.

Table 3: Medical management of acute asthma in the ED (N=217).

Variable (N = 217)	n (%)
Waiting time before presenting to the ED (hours) – mean (SD)	3.9 (6.4)
Time from initial assessment to initiating management (minutes) – mean (SD)	12.0 (11.0)
Length of stay in the ED (hours) – mean (SD)	2.5 (1.5)
Systemic steroid given at initial assessment?	
Yes	153 (70.5)
No	64 (29.5)
Timing of giving systemic steroid if not at initial assessment (n=64)	
First hour	10 (15.6)
Second hour	4 (6.3)
At Final assessment	3 (4.7)
Undocumented	47 (73.4)
Nebulized medication given at initial assessment?	
Yes	209 (96.3)
No	8 (3.9)
Type of nebulized medication given at initial assessment (n=209)	
Nebulized SABA alone	19 (9.1)
Nebulized SAMA alone	7 (3.3)
Nebulized SABA + nebulized SAMA	183 (87.6)
Timing of giving SABA if not at initial assessment (n=15)	
First hour	2 (13.3)
Second hour	3 (20.0)
At Final assessment	1 (6.7)
Undocumented	9 (60.0)
Other medications given during ED stay	
Antibiotics	42 (19.3)
Magnesium Sulphate	19 (8.8)
Respiratory support and oxygen delivery (n=217)	
High-flow nasal cannula (HFNC) oxygen therapy	40 (18.4)
Non-invasive ventilation (NIV)	4 (1.8)
None	173 (79.7)
Characteristics of patients receiving HFNC (n=40)	
Tachypneic (respiratory rate > 30 BPM)	5 (12.5)
Respiratory-distressed	21 (63.6)
With normal oxygen saturation (>95%)	17 (42.5)
Characteristics of patients receiving NIV (n=4)	
Severely tachypneic	2 (50%)
Respiratory-distressed	4 (100%)
With normal oxygen saturation	3 (75%)
Hypercapnia	0 (0)

ED; emergency department, SABA, short-acting beta agonist, SAMA; short-acting muscarinic antagonist
Post-Management Procedures

Forty-five patients (20.7%) were admitted to the hospital, 42 (93.3%) of whom were admitted to the medical ward. None of the admitted patients underwent PEFr measurements prior to admission or discharge. The main reasons for admission were respiratory distress at the initial assessment (n = 24; 53.3%), tachycardia (n = 18; 40%), and prior frequent presentation to the primary healthcare facility (n = 16; 35.6%).

Among the 172 (79.3%) patients who were discharged, medications were stepped up for only 8 (4.7%) patients, inhaler technique was checked in one patient, and a self-management plan was given for one patient. Only 5 patients

(2.9%) were referred to a pulmonologist. More details on post-management procedures in the ED are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Post-management procedures (N=217).

Variable (N = 217)	n (%)
Admission	45 (20.7)
Type of admission (n=45)	
Medical ward	42 (93.3)
High dependency unit	2 (4.4)
Intensive care unit	1 (2.2)
Reasons for admission* (n=45)	
Resuscitation with IV fluids	8 (17.8)
Respiratory distress on initial assessment	24 (53.3)
RR > 30 BPM	4 (8.9)
HR > 120 BPM	18 (40)
Saturation < 90%	9 (15.6)
PaCO ₂ > 35 mmHg	10 (22.2)
Consolidation on CXR	3 (6.7)
Recent frequent presentation to the ED	16 (35.6)
Discharge	172 (79.3)
Medications prescribed upon discharge (n=172)	
Inhaled steroid	45 (26.2)
LABA	19 (11)
LAMA	1 (0.6)
LTRA	1 (0.6)
MX	1 (0.6)
Oral steroid	112 (65.1)
Antibiotics	76 (44.2)

*Patients could have been admitted for more than 1 reason. RR; respiratory rate, HR; heart rate, PaCO₂; partial pressure of carbon dioxide, ED; emergency department, CXR; chest X-ray, LABA; long-acting beta agonist, LAMA; long-acting muscarinic antagonists; LTRA; leukotriene receptor antagonist, MX; methyl xanthine.

Discussion

Proper long-term management and appropriate therapeutic interventions are the mainstays for preventing asthma complications and controlling its socioeconomic burden; evidence-based guidelines aim to provide clear plans to achieve these goals. However, their application at the country level may be compromised by considerations such as educational barriers, healthcare delivery systems, and the country's resources.⁵ The need to explore the utilization of asthma guidelines in Oman to address the gaps in asthma management and decrease its national burden was outlined in 2009 by Al-Rawas et al.,¹⁹ a study describing the characteristics of asthma patients receiving outpatient care in a tertiary hospital (Sultan Qaboos University Hospital [SQUH] in Oman).

Our results, however, differ from those reported by Al-Rawas et al. Only 36.9% (n = 80) of our patients were taking inhaled corticosteroids (ICS), while 94.2% of the SQUH patients used ICS. This difference may be attributable to the lack of documentation in our ED (38.2% of patient records did not contain information about the patients' controller therapy before the ED visit) and to the fact that most SQUH patients had moderate persistent asthma.

Additionally, 40.2% of our patients fully complied with the controller treatment, compared to 25.6% in the SQUH cohort. Such low compliance rates were thought to be due to the lower perceived need for ICS therapy by the patients or the patients' cultural beliefs preventing them from using medications—especially inhalers—regularly. This effect was also observed in a regional study by Al-Jahdali et al.²⁰ These patients held many false beliefs and misconceptions about bronchial asthma as a disease and about the role of ICS, such as its potential to lead to addiction, compromising patients' adherence to medications. Self-reported adherence questionnaires can be utilized to capture such misbeliefs, ensure patients' understanding of their treatment regimen, and monitor their adherence.²¹

Poor documentation was observed during the ED visit and prior to hospital admission and discharge. Consequently, there were no available records on patients' asthma control levels before their presentation to the ED. Although most patients were residents of Muscat and their primary healthcare records were accessible to the ED physicians, there was also no documentation of the previous best PEFr. Inadequate documentation in the ED is linked to patient overcrowding, increased rates of interruptions, and time pressure.²² Including a preformatted chart customized for acute asthma assessment and management has been shown to enhance the documentation of medical history and assessment procedures in the ED; hence, a similar approach should be incorporated in Omani hospitals.²³

The GINA guidelines recommend that the PEFr be measured at the initial assessment; additionally, the Omani 2009 guidelines for asthma management advise measuring the PEFr of all asthma patients upon assessment.¹⁶ However, these guidelines were not followed at all in the ED. Hence, proper classification of asthma severity was not performed, which may have strongly compromised management decisions. Serial PEFr measurements assess the severity of airway obstruction and objectively demonstrate the patient's response to therapy, guiding physicians to appropriate therapy, the need for admission or discharge, and the possibility of relapse.^{4,24} Moreover, PEF meters are less expensive, easier to use, and more portable than spirometers and should be made available in all EDs.²⁵ Omani 2009 guidelines still recommend spirometry over PEF meter usage given the variability in reference values observed for the latter¹⁶; however, these approaches have been found equally appropriate for screening and monitoring asthma.²⁶ Interestingly, several studies in Europe and Africa also revealed that less than 50% of patients underwent PEF rate measurement, demonstrating that its importance is underestimated in ED settings worldwide.^{7,8,10} In contrast, vital signs documentation—a duty allocated to nurses—was performed for almost all patients included in our study.

According to the GINA and Omani 2009 guidelines, routine CXR is not recommended for acute asthma⁴ because it is only be useful in a few cases.¹⁶ Studies have established that there is a very low possibility of abnormality in acute asthma.^{18,27} Our findings were consistent with this observation; 66.7% (n = 145) of the patients underwent CXR, but only 6.9% (n = 10) had an abnormality.

Similarly, arterial or venous blood gas testing is only recommended in the presence of severe airflow obstruction, particularly if the forced expiratory volume in 1 second (FEV₁) or the peak expiratory flow is less than 40% of the predicted value or if the patient has a suboptimal response to first-line therapy.^{16,17} In our study, blood gas analysis was performed for 83 patients (38.2%). The PEFr and FEV₁ were not measured for all these patients, and the reason for performing blood gas analysis is unknown. Only 6.3% (n = 5) of these patients had acidosis, defined as a pH <7.35, and 16.5% had hypercapnia, defined as a pH >45 mmHg.

Therefore, our results support the findings of previous studies in which routine ABG and CXR showed low yields of abnormal results, which is also in line with the currently employed guidelines. Thus, it is safe to reduce CXR and ABG utilization to improve ED efficiency.

Regarding initial management at the ED, a more prominent trend toward adherence to the Omani guidelines was observed. A total of 70.5% of the patients received systemic steroids at the initial assessment, following the guideline recommendations of administering either IV CS or oral prednisolone in cases of mild attacks.¹⁶ Moreover, 87.6% of our patients received nebulized SABA and SAMA regardless of the severity, which also aligns with the BTS/SIGN recommendations for acute asthma management.²⁸ Nonetheless, recent updates to the GINA guidelines discouraged the use of SABA alone as a reliever therapy because SABA overreliance is linked to an increased risk of exacerbations and an increased risk of asthma-related deaths.²⁹ The GINA 2019 guidelines and subsequent updates recommend adding ICS to SABA treatment to reduce these risks.³⁰ These guidelines necessitate a corresponding update to the Omani asthma management guidelines; ICS use is not indicated for the initial management of asthma exacerbations in the latest (2009) guidelines.¹⁶

Over half of our patients did not have any reassessments recorded despite the recommendation in the GINA and Omani 2009 guidelines of patient status reassessment one hour after the initial assessment and at regular intervals, regardless of exacerbation severity, until a clear response to treatment has occurred or a plateau has been reached.^{4,16} A lack of proper monitoring was also noted in similar studies in the UK and Europe.^{10,31}

Only approximately 6–13% of patients with acute asthma generally require hospital admission.³² In our study, 20.7% of patients were admitted. This finding may be indicative of low long-term asthma control; however, definite conclusions cannot be drawn considering the lack of proper documentation. On another note, most reasons for admission reported in our study were based on clinical status at presentation (e.g., RR and oxygen saturation), while the Omani 2009 guidelines recommend determining the need for admission according to the patient's response to initial treatment rather than asthma severity at initial assessment.¹⁶

Commonly recommended interventions for decreasing the risk of relapse after discharge include medication adjustment, referral to specialists for follow-up, review of inhaler technique, and patient education.^{4,16,32} The implementation of these recommendations was found to be suboptimal in our study. Only 65.1% (n = 112) of our patients were prescribed a course of oral corticosteroids upon discharge, although administering oral corticosteroids for 5–7 days is reported to be associated with reduced relapse rates in the week after discharge.⁶

Only 26.2% (n = 45) of discharged patients were prescribed ICSs, which is against the GINA and Omani guidelines for prescribing ICSs upon discharge for most acute asthma patients.^{16,17} Moreover, ICS therapy is reported to decrease the risk for relapse and, in turn, ED visits.³³ In previous studies, underprescription of ICSs was attributed to their unavailability and higher costs³⁴; however, underuse may also be connected to a lack of knowledge of updated guidelines.

While the GINA guidelines recommend stepping up controller therapy for 2–4 weeks after discharge,⁴ only 4.7% of discharged patients had their medications stepped up. However, 44.8% (n = 77) of discharged patients had no records about their controller medications, which may have prevented the ED physician from prescribing medications due to the risk of overlapping with existing therapy. Hence, the lack of proper documentation may have hindered the delivery of appropriate care for those patients.

The GINA guidelines also recommend referral of patients to their health care provider or a pulmonologist within one week for regular follow-up until good symptom control and personal best lung function are achieved.⁴ Consistently, the Omani guidelines recommend follow-up within 48 hours in the primary health care center for patients discharged from the ED.¹⁶ These recommendations were also overlooked in RH, where only 2.9% of patients were referred to a pulmonologist upon discharge.

Furthermore, only one patient underwent an inhaler technique check in our ED, suggesting that most patients will continue to experience inadequate asthma control. Al-Rawas et al.¹⁹ assessed inhaler technique by a qualified respiratory therapist using a uniform protocol outlined by Hilton et al.,³⁵ revealing that only 30.4% had adequate technique.

Additionally, only one discharged patient in our study was given a self-management plan. Providing such plans is recommended to control symptoms and minimize the risk of exacerbations and health care utilization.⁴ Although this practice is generally underexecuted and only a small proportion of discharged patients are reported to receive such plans in the NHIS data and previous studies,^{8,36} our study demonstrated severely limited adherence to this recommendation. This lack of adherence may be related to the nature of ED visits, which do not allow for the proper collection of detailed patient education.³⁷ Addressing such gaps in designated asthma management procedures may significantly improve asthma care. Moreover, more research is needed to assess the reasons underlying nonadherence to Omani guidelines regarding discharge recommendations.¹⁶

Overall, the observed clear deficiencies in acute asthma management in the ED can be attributed to several factors. These include a lack of awareness of existing guidelines, noncompliance with international and local guidelines, and insufficient communication among various personnel involved in ED management. Specifically, there are notable gaps in reporting dynamics between junior physicians and their superiors and a lack of effective communication channels between ED physicians and primary care physicians in RH. To overcome these shortcomings, the designated authorities (e.g., Oman Emergency Society, Oman Respiratory Society, and Primary Health Care Society) should liaise to develop updated guidelines for Omani settings. Moreover, efforts should be directed toward delivering proper, regular training to ED personnel on guideline updates; an organizational culture that allows proper patient management within the ED should also be established.

The main limitation of our study was the retrospective chart review of cases; it was found that there was poor documentation of the history, assessment, and management of patients with acute asthma. This lack of comprehensive documentation made it challenging to ascertain the actual care given to patients and what was omitted; moreover, it made it difficult to identify any potential gaps in the treatment process. As a result, the findings of our study may be limited by the incomplete and inconsistent information available in the medical records. Additionally, data on different variables were unavailable, hindering the complete visualization of the patients' ED visits.

Conclusion

Our study highlights a serious deficiency in implementing national and international guidelines for managing bronchial asthma in the ED. We suggest that the Ministry of Health guidelines published in 2009 be updated and disseminated around the Sultanate of Oman. In addition, workshops and seminars should be conducted to highlight the magnitude of poor asthma control and the importance of implementing the guidelines.

Disclosure

AstraZeneca GCC has funded medical writing and editorial support for this article and took no part in the design of the study, data collection, or analysis.

Acknowledgments

Medical writing and editorial support were provided by DATACLin CRO and were funded by AstraZeneca GCC.

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