

Asthma symptoms could be aggravated by imbalance problems

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Asthma patients could be at a higher risk of worsening symptoms due to problems with their balance, according to new research.

The study will be presented today (2 September 2012) at the European Respiratory Society's Annual Congress in Vienna.

Researchers aimed to assess the link between asthma, anxiety and balance. Anxiety and imbalance are closely related. Muscles and joints are controlled by signals from the brain, which are, in turn, sent from stimuli from the eyes and inner ear. This function is also controlled by the [limbic system](#) in the brain, which is additionally responsible for emotions, such as anxiety.

It is well known that anxiety can exacerbate [asthma symptoms](#), yet there has been little research into whether balance abnormalities also have a [negative influence](#) on asthmatics.

The researchers measured levels of anxiety in 30 people with persistent controlled asthma and a control group without asthma. They used an established questionnaire, the Spielberger State–Trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults to measure a person's levels of anxiety. They also assessed [balance control](#) using dynamic posturography, which tests a person's control of their posture in different positions.

The results confirmed previous findings showing that asthmatics regularly suffer with anxiety problems. 88% of people in the asthma

group had a moderate or intense [anxiety level](#), compared with 46% in the control group.

The findings also revealed that the asthmatic group frequently performed worse in the balance test, compared with the control group.

The researchers suggest that balance abnormalities should be investigated in patients with asthma, particularly those with already high [levels of anxiety](#), to prevent the deterioration of their symptoms.

Lead author of the research, Dr Angelo Geraldo Jose Cunha, from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, said: "Our research has shed light on an area of asthma that has received little attention. The links we've seen between brain, lung and labyrinth suggest that asthma symptoms could be much worse in people with balance problems caused by anxiety or in people suffering from balance issues independent of anxiety problems.

"This study had confirmed that asthma has many clinical expressions that go beyond symptoms solely affecting the lung. In addition to healthcare professionals paying attention to balance disorders in asthmatics, this field of research requires further investigation to fully understand the link between balance, anxiety and asthma."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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