

Input from a psychologist can help improve asthma symptoms

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Psychological input into the treatment and management of people with severe asthma can help improve their symptoms, according to a new study.

People with [severe asthma](#) often experience symptoms that are difficult to treat. There is current debate in the healthcare community about the best way to treat these people. Around 27% of people with severe asthma are thought to experience psychological problems'; however, this isn't routinely addressed by asthma healthcare professionals.

The new research, presented at the European Respiratory Society (ERS) International Congress in Munich today (8 September 2014), suggests that severe [asthma symptoms](#) could improve when psychological needs are addressed in this group of patients.

The researchers investigated the effectiveness of an appointment with a [clinical psychologist](#) in 13 people who were identified as having a psychological illness alongside an admission to [hospital](#) with an asthma exacerbation two or more times in the previous 12 months.

The patients were monitored for admissions to hospital and days in hospital in the six months before input from the psychologist and in the six months afterwards. The results showed that, prior to the appointments, the group totalled 19 asthma admissions to hospital and 159 days in hospital. After psychological support, these totals decreased to 10 admissions and 93 days in hospital, meaning a 42% reduction in

hospital days over 6 months.

Dr Andrew Tan, from the University Hospital Southampton, said: "The results of our study can be a key factor in the current debate on how to treat people with severe asthma. We know that a significant proportion of these patients experience psychological issues and these results demonstrate that by tackling these problems, we can also help improve [asthma](#) symptoms. This not only helps to improve the quality of life for the patient, it also eases the burden on healthcare systems by reducing the amount of time these patients are in hospital."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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