

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term: Fall

Graduation Year: 2006

Title: The Experience of Rural Children Whose Daily Lives Are Limited by Asthma

Asthma is the most common cause of disability in childhood, affecting more than one million US children. Whereas many researchers have studied the biological basis of the disease, little is known about children's experience of the illness. This study was designed to describe what children ages 7 to 12 years are trying to do as they confront symptoms and limitations due to asthma. Children who participated in this study were first identified by a school nurse and then by a parent as having disability due to asthma. Next, three interviews were conducted in the homes of each of eight rural schoolchildren. The eight children chose to be in the study after their parents gave permission. The children described difficulty breathing in ways doctors and nurses do not usually think about asthma. The children also explained what they were trying to do and what it was like for them at home, at school, and in the places where they received health care. Some reasons for ongoing trouble with asthma were apparent in the children's descriptions and in observations made in the home during interviews. There were important implications for efforts reduce the burden of asthma among these school-age children. The study demonstrates children are capable of providing very detailed descriptions of their experience of asthma. These descriptions can help identify and resolve factors that contribute to disability.