

# THE EXPERIENCE OF RURAL CHILDREN WHOSE DAILY LIVES ARE LIMITED BY ASTHMA

Ben Francisco

Dr. Eileen J. Porter, Dissertation Supervisor

## ABSTRACT

Asthma is the most common cause of disability in childhood, affecting more than one million U.S. children. The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to describe children's experience of disabling asthma. After obtaining informed consent from the parent and assent from the child, 8 rural children aged 7 to 10 had 3 interviews in their homes over a period of 2 to 3 weeks. Data were analyzed using Porter's descriptive phenomenological method. Features of the personal-social context of the experience included: discovering that asthma changes what I can do, becoming the one who knows my asthma, knowing how other people respond to my asthma, and coming to know more about asthma. Phenomena capturing the children's overall intentions included: making the best of things, noticing when my asthma is getting worse, making my breathing better, asking to be treated like a normal person, getting someone to help me, showing others my asthma, learning about asthma, and thinking about having asthma the rest of my life. Children described aspects of disability and manifestations of asthma that have not been adequately appreciated by health care professionals. Findings pointed to opportunities to improve care at home, at school, and in clinical settings. These 8 young children expressed clear intentions that are a basis for future research and efforts to reduce the public health burden of asthma.