The Asthma Insight and Management survey

The 2009 AIM survey provides insight into the experiences of asthma patients in the US

During the summer of 2009, Schering-Plough, now part of Merck, sponsored a survey of more than 2,500 asthma patients in the United States and a general population survey in which approximately 45% of adults reported that they or a family member had asthma. Called Asthma Insight and Management (AIM), the survey, according to the authors, found the percentage of patients reporting emergency department visits and hospitalizations virtually unchanged since the last major survey conducted in 1998 (Table 1).

AIM revealed a significant impact of asthma on the American workforce, with 8% of adults reporting a current diagnosis and asthma patients reporting a one third reduction in productivity during periods when asthma is most severe. In addition to the 2,500 asthma patients surveyed, AIM also questioned more than 1,000 adults without asthma about missed work days, finding that adults with asthma took more than 300% more sick days, an average of 12.4 days per year, than those without asthma and restricted their daily activities an average of nearly 40 days per year.

The survey results also indicate that patients have poor understanding of their conditions and of what constitutes good control. Although the vast majority

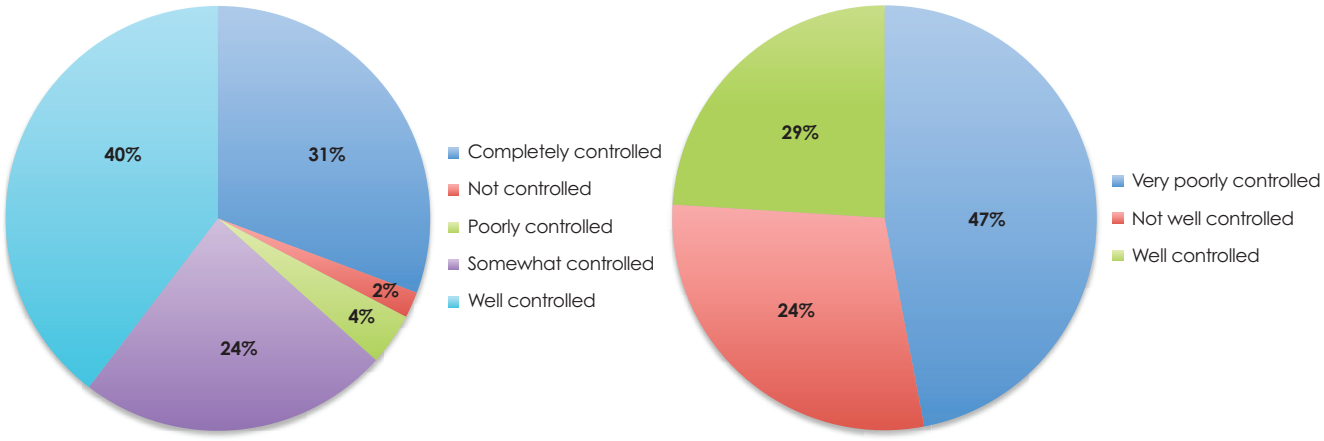
Table 1

Impact of asthma on health system use

	(percent of patients)	
	1998	**2009**
Hospitalizations	7	7
Unscheduled emergency visits	25	26
Adults visiting emergency department	19	16
Missed work or school days	25	20

Figure 1

Asthma control in the past 4 weeks



(a) Patient perspective

(b) Control classification

Figure 2

Frequency of inhaler use for quick relief from asthma symptoms in the past year

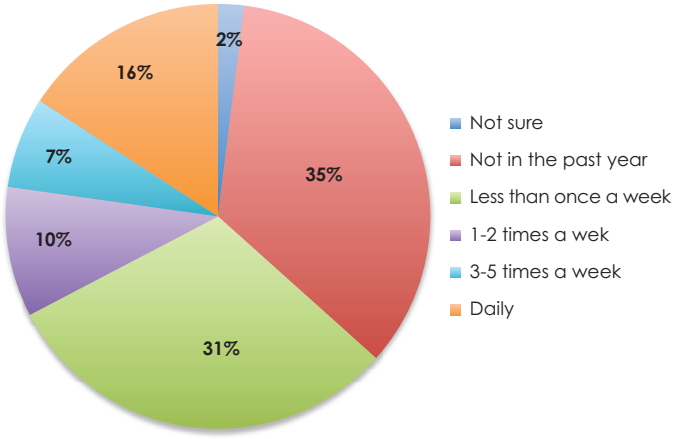
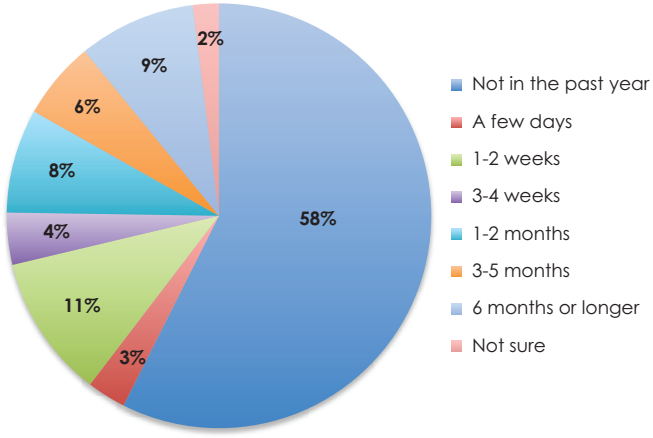


Figure 3

Interruptions in use of asthma maintenance medication



of the more than 300 clinicians surveyed reported using the term "asthma exacerbations," less than one quarter of the patients surveyed said they had ever heard the term. While approximately 70% of the patients reported that their asthma was either "completely" or "well controlled," in actuality, about 70% had conditions that were either "not well controlled" or "very poorly controlled" according to National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) guidelines (Fig. 1).

Approximately 1 in 6 patients used a rescue inhaler on a daily basis, with one third of patients using a rescue inhaler at least once a week (Fig. 2). Only 35% of respondents to the survey reported no rescue inhaler use over the past year. At the same time, almost 10% of the patients had stopped using their maintenance medication for half the year or longer, and nearly 40% said they had interrupted maintenance medication use for at least a week.

—Inhalation