

Zurich, 14 September 2009

## Press Release

# Largest asthma survey shows disease is not controlled in majority of children

Asthma is not controlled in almost two thirds of affected children according to the largest ever international survey undertaken in paediatric asthma<sup>1</sup>.

This poor result is despite apparently straightforward clinical guidelines and widely available preventative treatments for children with asthma.

The survey, "Room To Breathe" conducted by ICM Research, found that although only six per cent of parents had rated their child's asthma as severe, nearly a quarter of their children (23 per cent) had been taken to an emergency department in the previous 12 months. In addition, the survey results highlighted some significant gaps between how physicians agree they should be treating children with asthma and what patients and parents are experiencing.

Dr Will Carroll of Derbyshire Children's Hospital, Derby, UK, a co-author said: "This shows that despite the highly effective treatments that are available, asthma in children is badly controlled and parents are badly informed by physicians."

"We are not really doing well enough. We are performing at a lower level than we should be and we are letting our patients down," he said.

The Room To Breathe survey was carried out among 1,284 parents and 943 children aged four to 15 in six countries: UK, South Africa, the Netherlands, Greece, Hungary and Canada. Details of the survey are being released at the European Respiratory Society Congress 2009 in Vienna, September 12th to 16th.

Asthma also affected the daily lives of the children and their families with 69 per cent of children avoiding sports and strenuous activity; half not sleeping properly, 42 per cent missing school, one in five not seeing their friends and one in five families curtailing outings and other activities. Ten per cent of children even said they had been teased or bullied because of their condition.

Despite these limitations and the impact on their child's life, more than half of parents (57 per cent) were concerned about the effect of steroids in the asthma treatments. Inhaled corticosteroids have been endorsed by guidelines and are widely recognised by physicians as the cornerstone of therapy in paediatric asthma with studies showing that these are effective in controlling childhood asthma and reducing exacerbations<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Room To Breathe survey. Nycomed Data on file. September 2009

<sup>2</sup> Global Initiative for Asthma. Global Strategy for Asthma Management and Prevention 2008

Professor Paul Brand of the Princess Amalia Children's Clinic, Zwolle, the Netherlands, co-author said: "There seems to be a gap between the asthma guidelines for doctors which seem so logical and straightforward and what happens in real life. It is time to challenge this state of affairs and serve our patients better," he said.

He added "The limitations children suffer in their daily lives could be more frequently overcome by appropriate use of inhaled steroids."

The majority of children had first been diagnosed at the age of three and the severity of their asthma was assessed at the start of the survey using established methods. The condition was found not to be adequately controlled in 65 per cent of the children.

Notably the Room To Breathe found that nearly three quarters of parents (73 per cent) described their children's asthma as "mild". All parents were asked how worried they had been when their child was first diagnosed and 77 per cent said they had been "quite" or "very" worried. However, when asked how worried they felt now only 38 per cent said they felt "quite" or "very" worried.

Findings across the six countries were similar although in South Africa where the interviews were face-to-face rather than by telephone, there was greater parental anxiety and children's asthma was more likely to be rated as problematic.

Professor Johannes Wildhaber, Department of Paediatrics Hospital Friburg, Switzerland, co-author said: "What is lacking in our daily practice is actual communication with the patients. If we are to have better control of our patients' asthma then we have to inform our patients more effectively about the condition and why they need to follow their doctors' advice."

*The Room to Breathe survey was supported by Nycomed*

## About Asthma

Asthma is a chronic lung disease caused by airway inflammation and results in airway constriction in response to certain stimuli. It is characterized by a variety of symptoms, including wheezing, coughing and a tightening of the airways, which causes shortness of breath and can be life-threatening. According to the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA), more than 300 million people worldwide suffer from asthma; the prevalence varies from 1 to 18 percent of the population in different countries. The prevalence of asthma is increasing by approximately 50 percent every decade and worldwide deaths from asthma total more than 250,000 annually<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Global Initiative for Asthma. The Global Burden of Asthma Report 2004

## About Nycomed

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Nycomed employs 12,000 associates worldwide, and its products are available in more than 100 countries. It has strong platforms in Europe and in fast-growing markets such as Russia/CIS and Latin America. While the US and Japan are commercialised through best-in-class partners, Nycomed plans to further strengthen its own position in key Asian markets.

Headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, the company generated total sales of €3.4 billion in 2008 and an adjusted EBITDA of €1.2 billion.

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## About the Room to Breathe survey

ICM Research conducted the survey and interviewed a total sample of 1,284 parents and 943 children aged seven to 15 in six countries: UK, South Africa, the Netherlands, Greece, Hungary and Canada telephone interviews were conducted in all countries except South Africa where interviews were conducted face-to-face. Interviews were conducted between November 25th 2008 and January 9th 2009. For further information see [www.icmresearch.co.uk](http://www.icmresearch.co.uk) or contact [Ben.Gibbons@icmresearch.co.uk](mailto:Ben.Gibbons@icmresearch.co.uk).

ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

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