

## Paper Session E3: Risky Behaviors of Adolescents and Young Adults: Assessment and Intervention

### *Health Risk Behaviors of Adolescents and Young Adults with a History of Asthma*

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**Purpose:** Asthma is considered the most common serious chronic disease in children and adolescents. To add to health behavior science a study was undertaken comparing adolescents and young adults who have asthma with those without asthma on their participation in health risk behaviors of smoking and alcohol use.

**Methods:** A secondary analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was undertaken for this study. Our cohort consists of the 4,874 adolescents and young adults from across the USA who participated in the surveys and who self reported having asthma.

**Results:** Some differences in smoking habits were found in this study. In wave I, 56% of each population, asthma and non-asthma, reported having tried cigarette smoking. By Wave III, 79% of those with asthma vs. 75% of those without asthma answered “yes” to this question. In middle or high school (Wave I), those with asthma drank less than their non-asthma counterparts, but eight years later (Wave III), they drank more by just over half a drink per time more than those without asthma.

**Implications:** A major finding from this study was the high percentages of asthmatics who are participating in health risk behaviors. Specifically they are reporting higher rates of smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol when compared to their non-asthma peers. This finding is concerning because of the implications regarding the asthmatics understanding of the disease, their management of the disease, and the long-term health outcomes associated with tobacco and alcohol use. When an adolescent who has a chronic health issue begins high health risk-taking behaviors interventions must be planned. Professionals across multiple disciplines are committed to promoting healthy behaviors in individuals throughout the lifespan.