



# Fighting for breath

**A European patient perspective on severe asthma**

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European Federation of Allergy and Airways  
Diseases Patient's Association (EFA)  
[www.efanet.org](http://www.efanet.org)



**Dr Erkkka Valovirta**

**EFA Medical Advisor**

**The challenge and impact of severe  
asthma across Europe**



# Asthma in Europe

- The most common chronic condition in children
- 32 million people affected - asthma has doubled in the last decade
- 6 million live with severe asthma – the majority of which should be controllable
- 1.5 million have serious symptoms that can not be controlled with existing therapy
- Asthma kills 12,000 a year in Western Europe alone
- Asthma resulted in 8 million emergency admissions in the last year
- All ages and races affected – including more adults than children
- Attacks can be triggered by respiratory infections and daily elements e.g. animal fur, smoking, pollution, cold air and chlorine



# Severe asthma

- Classifications vary
  - Sleep disturbance once a week or more often in the last year
  - A wheezing attack once a week or more often in the last year
  - One or more speech-limiting attacks in the last year
- Patients often compromise their quality of life and adopt coping strategies
- Severity of asthma may be linked with duration of disease and lack of disease control rather than age
- People with uncontrolled severe asthma are more at risk of hospitalisation and life-threatening attacks



# Treatment goals

- Physical capacity is consistent with age
- Symptoms are minimised
- No night time symptoms
- Exacerbations are as rare as possible
- Pulmonary function as close to normal as possible
- Treatment does not cause excessive side effects
- Treatment concordance



# Global burden of asthma

## Prev rates %:

UK – 16.8

Australia – 14.7

US – 10.9

Ireland – 14.6

Netherlands – 8.7

Finland – 8.0

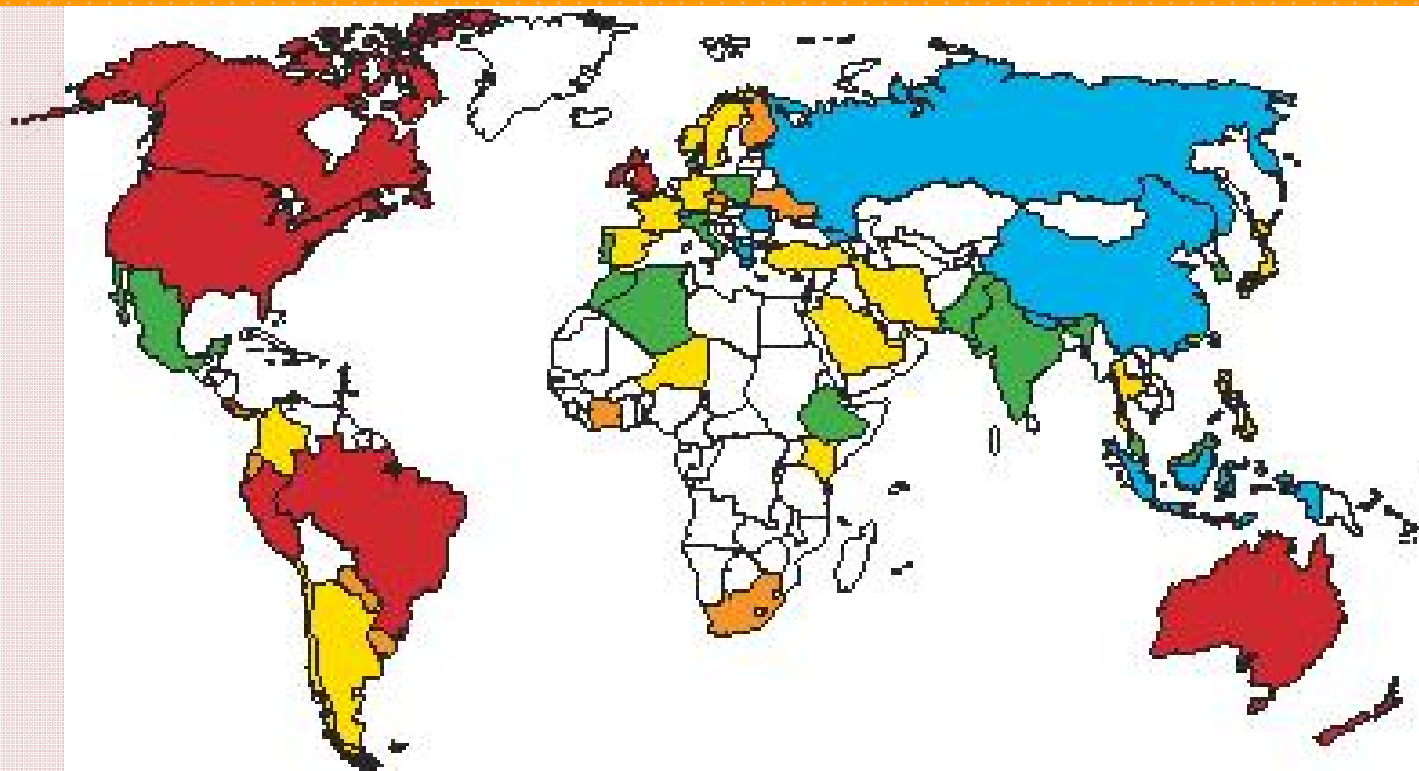
France – 6.9

Germany – 6.9

Sweden – 6.5

Spain – 5.7

Denmark – 3.0



## Proportion of population (%)\*



$\geq 10.1$



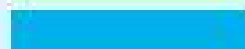
7.6-10.0



5.1-7.5



2.5-5.0



0-2.5



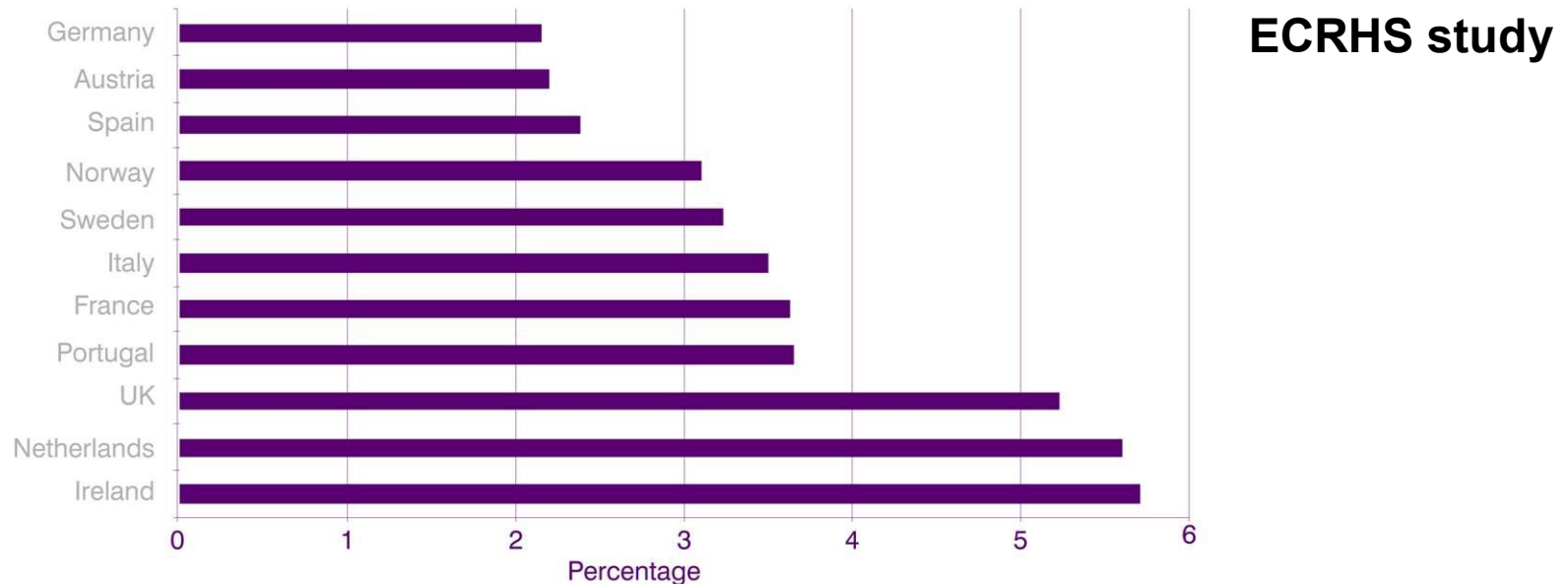
No standardised data available

Ref: Global burden of asthma 2004



# Severe symptoms – widespread in Europe

Figure 01: Prevalence of an asthma attack in past 12 months in 20-44 year olds. Selected European countries.

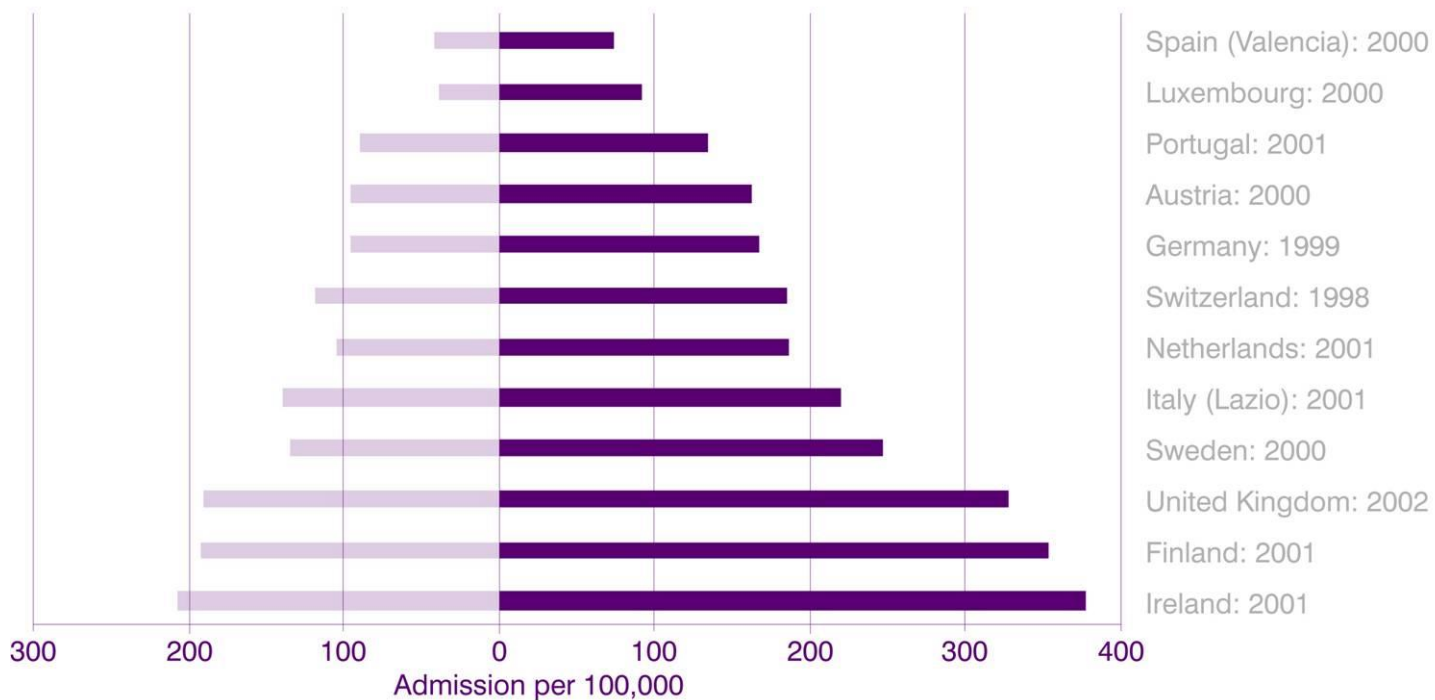


Source: Variations in the prevalence of respiratory symptoms, self reported asthma attacks, and use of asthma medication in the European Community Respiratory Health Survey (ECRHS). European Community Health Survey. EurRespir J 1996; 9



# Hospital admissions

Figure 02: Hospital admissions for asthma, ages 0-14. Selected European countries.



Source: Unpublished research data

■ - Females ■ - Males



# Asthma deaths per age group

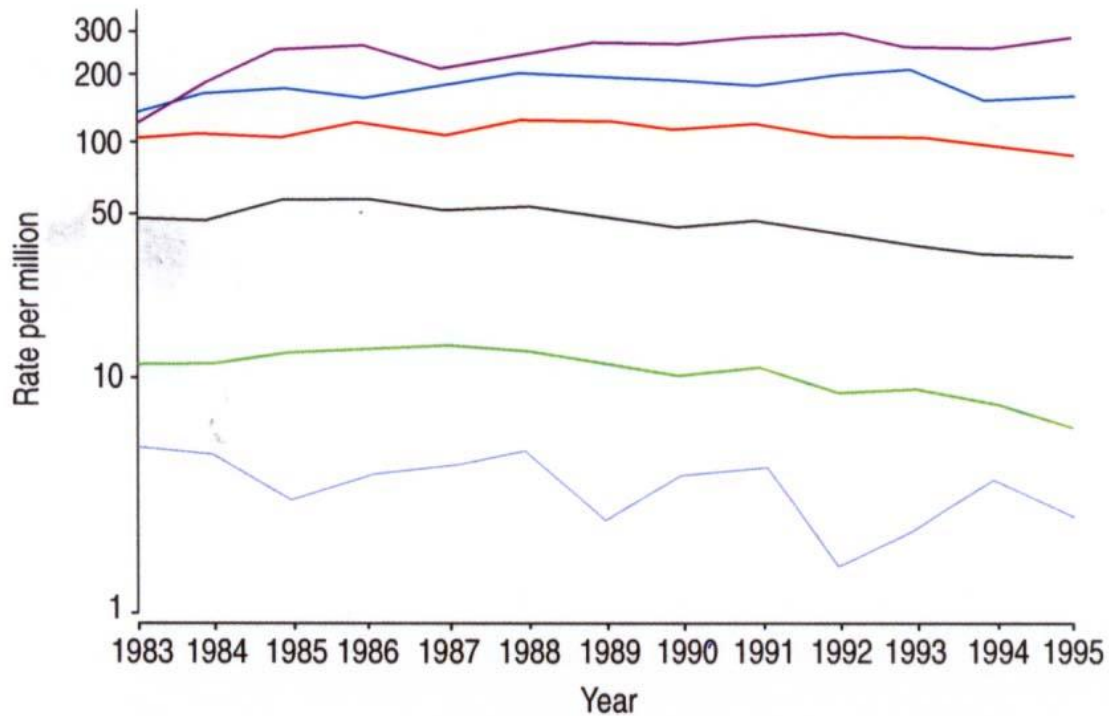
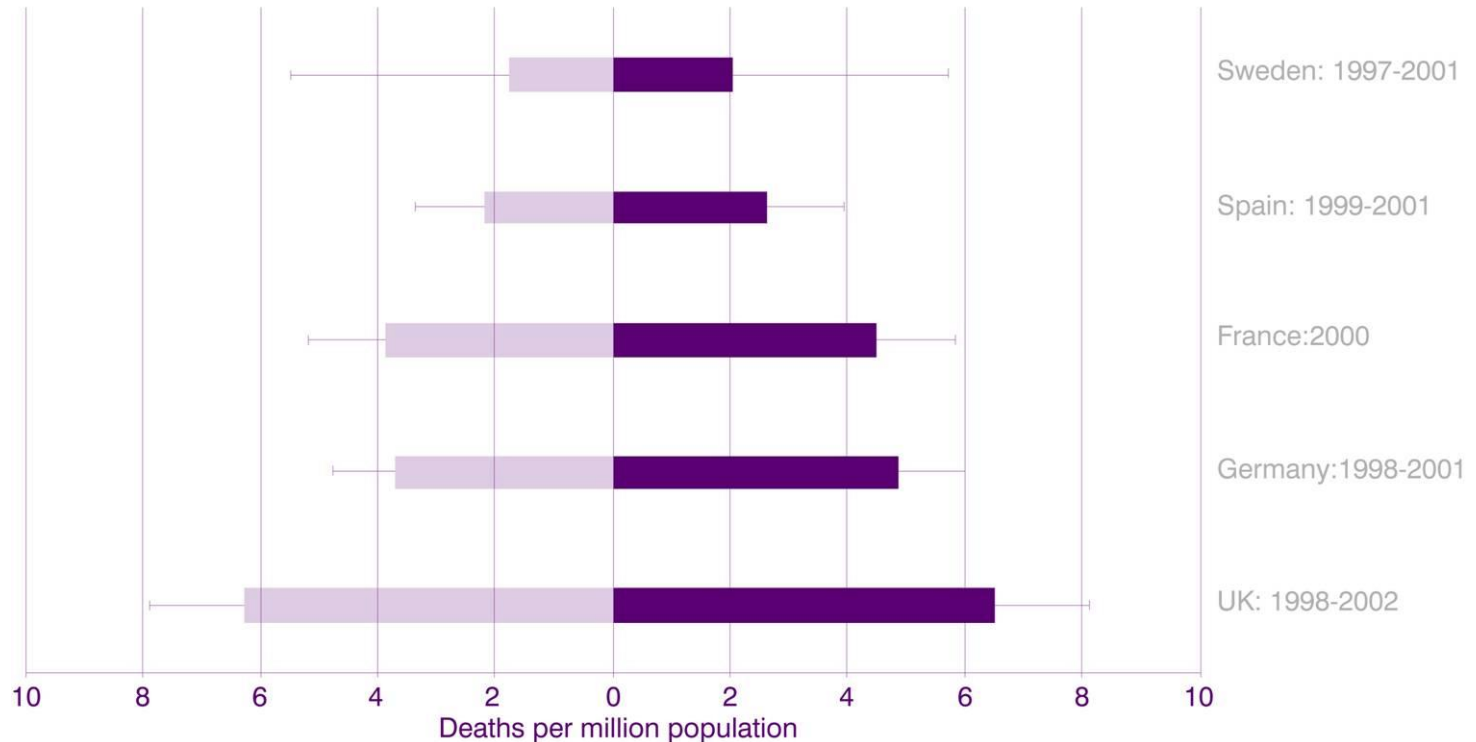


Fig. 1. – Asthma deaths per million population subdivided into various age groups in England and Wales. — 5–14 years; — 14–44 years; — 45–64 years; — 65–74 years; — 75–84 years; —  $\geq 85$  years. Data presented with permission from *BMJ* 1997; 314: 1439–1441.



# Mortality

Figure 03: Deaths attributed to asthma.  
Selected European countries, ages 15-44.



Source: WHO Mortality Database

■ - Females ■ - Males



# Conclusions

- Asthma varies across regions and age groups
- Mortality data from all countries are not available plus data in the over 45s where the risk is greatest
- Severe asthma can be complex and requires careful evaluation
- More research is still needed into causes and prevention



# The challenge

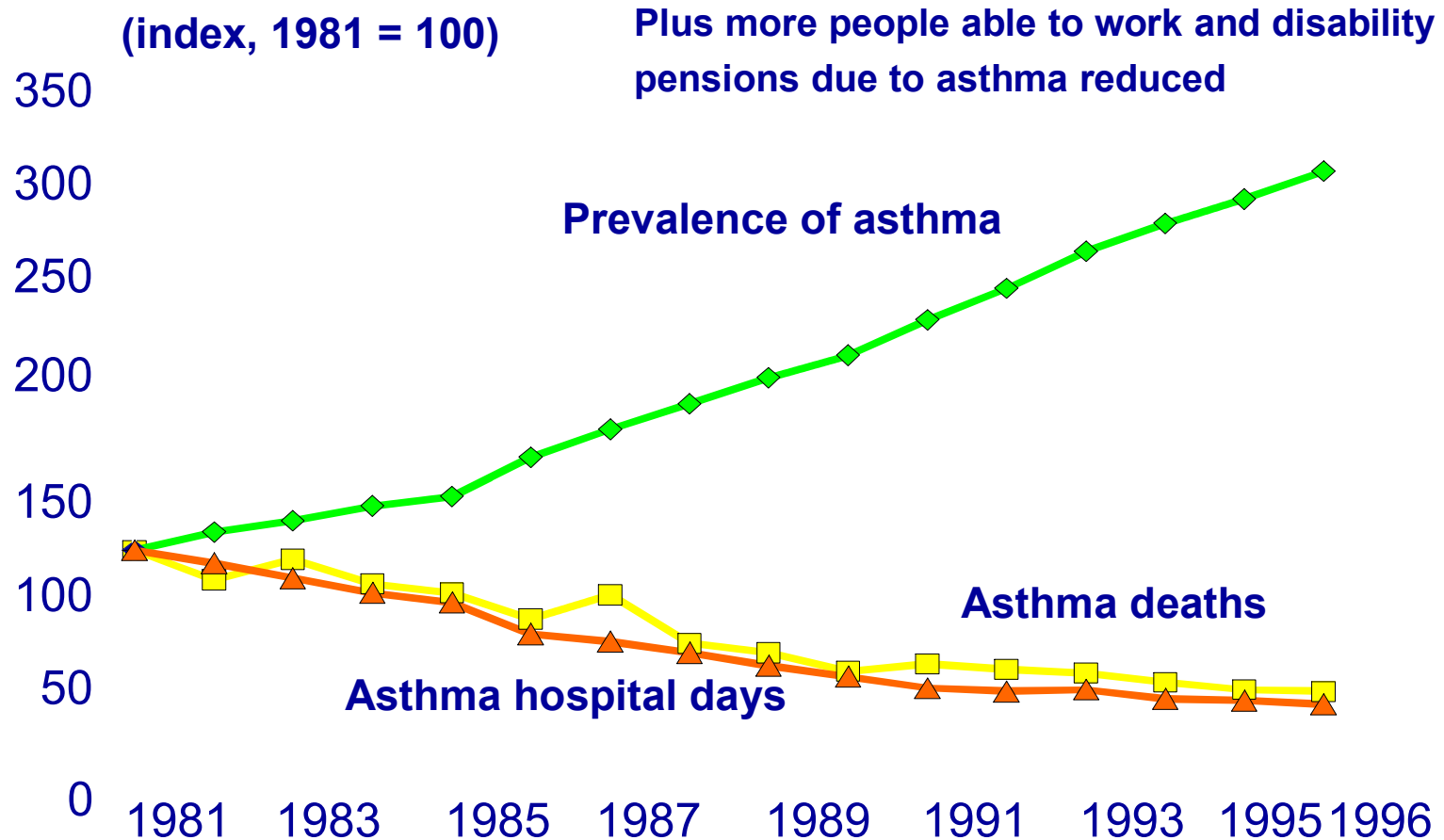
- Asthma is widespread but misunderstood
  - Prevalence has doubled in the last decade
- Asthma death and emergency admissions are still too high
- Severe asthma places a huge burden on the individual and on society
- There is a lack of surveillance data monitoring impact
- Best practice examples are not being shared and implemented

*Patients need to be listened to and empowered*



# Improving care – it is possible

Finland, 1981–1996:



Lähde: Haahtela ja Klaukka 1998