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Name of students: Chan Chui Yan, Chan Wai Chi, Chung Lai Wan, Choi Tsz Ching, Ho Lok Hei, Kung Siu Man, Leung Tsz Ying, Ng Mung Tik, So Hiu Ting, Wong Sin Hung, Yip Chun Cheung

Title: A survey on the prevalence of allergic rhinitis and its influence of the level of quality of life in secondary school students in Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

Respiratory health problem is an important public health issue. Allergic rhinitis becomes a common chronic allergic respiratory disease in children. It impairs quality of life but the prevalence and impact in secondary school students in Hong Kong has not been studied.

This aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of Allergic Rhinitis and its influence of the level of Quality of Life in secondary school students in Hong Kong.

For the design and method, this study adopted a non-experimental, cross-sectional descriptive quantitative design. A questionnaire which consisted of three parts was used to collect the data. The first part was the demographic data. The second part was Score for Allergic Rhinitis (SFAR) which identified the students with AR. The last part was Short Form 36 health survey (SF-36), a generic instrument which was adopted for quality of life measurement with eight aspects. Aged 13-18 students from two different secondary schools in Hong Kong were invited to complete the questionnaire by convenience sampling. Chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to investigate the difference of the prevalence of AR in accordance with age, gender, ownership of pets with fur and feather, smoking, passive smoking, different living districts and the presence of family history respectively. Also, the levels of QOL between the students with AR and those without were compared by the eight aspects of SF-36.

1176 secondary school students were participated in the study. The response rate was 98%. The prevalence of AR in secondary school students in Hong Kong was 63%. Most of the risk factors including age, gender, pet-ownership, owners of pets with fur and feather, smoking, passive smoking and different living districts shows no significant result in prevalence of AR ($p>0.05$) except family history ($p=0.000$). Generally AR subjects presented a lower level of QOL than those without it in all

eight aspects of SF-36. And by comparing with the findings from the University of Hong Kong in 1999, these subjects showed significantly lower level of QOL in the aspects of bodily pain, vitality, social functioning and general mental health.

This study revealed that AR is a prevailing problem in secondary school students in Hong Kong and the level of QOL of those suffering are greatly affected. Since family history is the most significant risk factor of AR, it is important to raise the awareness of AR among the secondary school students especially to those with a family history for early medical seeking.

Also, this study is relevant to clinical practice. A better understanding of the prevalence of AR and its impact on economic cost, health-related disability, and health related quality of life is necessary to contribute to the development of preventive strategies for AR such as the formulation of public health talk.