

Introduction

Respiratory diseases are associated with increased morbidity and mortality in children. The most important respiratory diseases are respiratory tract infections (RTIs) and bronchial asthma.

RTIs have high incidence rate in developing countries due to unsanitary environment and represent one of the most common causes of mortality in young children below 5 years of age.

Asthma is considered one of the major world wide health problems that received an increased attention in the recent years. Asthma is considered to be an inflammatory disease (**Radwan et al., 1993**). **Hakansson et al (1990)** stated that it was the result of an ongoing inflammatory process characterized by a bronchial hyperactivity. Asthma is the most common chronic illness of childhood and it has been steadily increasing in prominence in this regard. Almost 1 in 20 children in Victoria have this problem (**Stockman, 1994**). The estimates for developed countries suggest that it affect between 11 and 20% of all school age children (**Godfrey, 1992**).

The management of children with asthma is costly. The costs include measurable expenses related to doctor's fees, hospitalization, medications, Special diets and home renovations. In addition, there are immeasurable costs such as; school time lost, growth retardation and emotional stress (**Chandra, 1992**).

These economic and psychological considerations as well as recent data indicating a progressive increase in the prevalence of allergic disease particularly asthma, have led to attempts at prevention. Therefore the physician responsible for the health care of children must recognize the risk factors for persistent wheezing and modify that can be changed.

Aim of the Work

The aim of the present work is to describe the frequency and severity of the respiratory diseases (particularly RTIs and bronchial asthma) in children aged 2-12 years living in South Sinai Governorate which is considered as a Native Governorate.

Also to obtain base line measures for assessment of future trends in the prevalence and severity of these diseases and to study the etiology and pathogenesis of these diseases to provide a frame work for further etiological research into life style, environmental and medical care factors affecting these diseases.