Asthma prevalence and deaths in Australia still high by world standards, despite declining trends

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The report, Asthma in Australia 2008, estimates that asthma affects more than 1 in 10 Australians -- equivalent to over 2 million people.

Professor Guy Marks, Director of the Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring, said the prevalence of asthma in Australian children is plateauing, if not declining.

'In the long run, this should reduce the overall burden of asthma in Australia,' Professor Marks said.

Report co-author, Leanne Poulos said, 'Although asthma deaths declined significantly between 1989 and 2006, the Australian death rate is still high on an international scale.'

Although lower than New Zealand and the UK, asthma death rates in Australia are almost three times the rate in Europe.

Asthma accounted for 402 deaths in Australia in 2006.

The report showed that hospital admission rates for asthma have also declined since 1993□□, by 45% among adults and by 42% among children.

Despite these positive trends, asthma continues to be a major concern in

Australia and there are several areas we can work on to improve asthma outcomes,' Professor Marks said.

Of particular concern is that:

-- Australians with asthma continue to smoke almost as commonly as people without asthma, despite the known adverse effects.
-- An estimated 11% of Australian children with asthma live in homes where smoking occurs inside the home.
-- The majority of people with asthma do not have a written asthma action plan, even though national guidelines have recommended their use for the past 20 years.
-- Asthma is a major problem among Indigenous Australians. Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, they have higher rates of hospitalisation and mortality due to asthma.

Source: Research Australia

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