

The Asthma Foundation supports the new Ministerial Committee on Poverty

The connection between poverty and bad respiratory health is well established. Poverty affects respiratory health in many ways. Overcrowding and cold, damp houses are known to cause respiratory illnesses. Poor access to health care prevents these illnesses from being treated adequately.

Each year large numbers of children are admitted to hospital with respiratory conditions which are largely preventable. For example, Waikato DHB statistics for 2000-2006 estimate that 97% of admissions to hospital for asthma were avoidable – about half of were children aged 0-14.

Prevention is the key to keeping our children out of hospital. This is not just good for our health but will save money. Ministry of Health figures reveal it costs \$1,121 a day to treat a patient in hospital for asthma. Asthma is the leading cause of hospitalisations for children under 5. The Asthma Foundations aim is to achieve better respiratory health for New Zealanders. In addition to helping people to manage their own respiratory conditions and look after themselves better, we need to encourage central and local Government to reduce poverty. Struggling families need to be able to heat their houses properly and provide their children with good food and warm clothing in winter.

Increasing income inequality and the rise in poverty in New Zealand were recently highlighted in a recent report from the OECD, which showed that the problems were getting worse faster in New Zealand than in other developed countries.

We hope that the new Ministerial Committee on Poverty and Support will be a good first step to tackling these issues.

Contact Cindy Borrie – 0274 433 905

For health stats - <http://www.waikatodhb.govt.nz/file/fileid/9313>