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**THE LUNG ASSOCIATION/  
ANGUS REID GROUP POLL**

**LUNG ASSOCIATION SURVEY SHOWS ASTHMATICS HAVE LOW  
LEVEL OF CONTROL OVER ASTHMA AND MAY BE AT RISK**

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## **LUNG ASSOCIATION SURVEY SHOWS ASTHMATICS HAVE LOW LEVEL OF CONTROL OVER ASTHMA AND MAY BE AT RISK**

**December 17, 1997** - - Findings from a recent survey conducted by the Angus Reid Group for the Ontario Lung Association show asthmatics may be overly confident about managing their disease.

This poll was conducted by telephone between November 7 and 12, 1997, among a representative sample of 200 Ontario adults with asthma. The results have an associated margin of error of  $\pm 6.9$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The survey indicates the majority of respondents (91%) feel confident in their ability to manage their asthma – in fact, 54% report their asthma is very well controlled. However, based on further findings in the survey, only 15% of respondents had actual, clinically controlled asthma. This indicates respondents' sense of confidence and control is ill-founded, and may put asthmatics at risk.

Buoyed by a false sense of confidence and control, a person with asthma may not take the necessary steps to prevent an asthma attack, and once within the throes of an asthma episode may not have enough time to seek the necessary medical help or medication.

For the purposes of the study, the level of actual, clinical control respondents have over asthma was derived by looking at the following factors: frequency of asthma symptoms, night waking, and the impact of asthma on daily activities.

The study found that 58% of respondents experienced wheezing, coughing or shortness of breath daily or several times a week. A significant 36% wake several times a week or once or twice a month with asthma symptoms. Only 50% of respondents can exercise often. And, an alarming 45% of respondents have visited a hospital emergency department in the last week, month or year as a result of asthma.

"These findings indicate a high sense of confidence but a low rate of true control over asthma," says John Wright, Senior Vice President of the Angus Reid Group.

Poorly managed asthma results in close to 500 deaths in Canada each year. Asthma specialists note that about 80% of these deaths are avoidable.

“A trip to the hospital emergency department as a result of asthma is a strong indicator that someone’s asthma is not under control,” says Ross Reid, President and CEO of The Lung Association. “These findings are troubling to us. We need to see actual, clinical control over asthma, not incorrectly perceived control. We know The Lung Association must step up its role in asthma education. It makes the need for donations to the *C h r i s t m a s S e a l C a m p a i g n* more urgent than ever,” he adds.

Recognizing that asthma education results in better patient control, which in turn leads to fewer hospital visits and fewer deaths, The Lung Association offers group and individual programs and services for people with asthma and their caregivers. The Lung Association has also just opened an Asthma Education Centre in Ottawa this month.

Funds donated to the *C h r i s t m a s S e a l C a m p a i g n*, currently in place across Canada, will help support asthma education, medical research and other services for people with lung disease.

For further information on The Lung Association, the Angus Reid Group survey and the Christmas Seal Campaign, please contact:

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## **ASTHMA FACTS**

The Lung Association has been helping people with lung disease since 1900. Today, the Ontario Lung Association works to prevent and help people cope with all forms of lung disease, including emphysema, lung cancer and asthma.

Asthma is a lung disease in which the airways tighten, leading to coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath.

Asthma affects up to one in five children and one in 10 adults across Canada. The Angus Reid Group estimates that more than two million Ontarians have asthma.

Asthma is the number one cause of hospitalization among pre-schoolers and the number one reason for school absence among children. It is the third leading cause of adult absence in the workplace.

If not managed properly, asthma can be fatal. Each year in Canada, approximately 500 people die from asthma. It is estimated 80% of these deaths are avoidable.

Asthma puts a tremendous financial strain on the health care system and society as a whole:

In 1992, there were about 21,400 admissions to Ontario hospitals, and 78,823 hospital days were incurred for the treatment of asthma.

The cost of this hospitalization was \$55 million.

The total cost of asthma in Canada, including direct and indirect costs, is estimated to be as much as \$648 million.

Asthma is a difficult lung disease to manage: it is difficult to diagnose; its symptoms can be subtle; it can differ tremendously from one person to the next; it can vary widely from day to day in any one individual; and it can look very much like a number of other respiratory conditions.

The Lung Association offers educational programs for children with asthma and their families, asthma information sessions, counselling and literature on asthma. It also offers research grants and continuing education for respirologists, respiratory therapists and others on the asthma treatment team.

Funding for these programs and services is provided by donations to the Christmas Seal Campaign and other fund raising initiatives.