

International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood

Hywel Williams still represents the interests of eczema physicians and sufferers on the ISAAC study – the world's largest epidemiological study into the distribution and causes of asthma, hayfever and eczema in childhood. In fact, the study holds the Guinness World Record for the largest epidemiological study that has ever been conducted with data on over a million children in 83 countries. ISAAC Phase I documented the prevalence of asthma, hayfever and eczema symptoms using simple validated questionnaires in as many countries as possible over the world. ISAAC Phase II has explored a few countries in more detail, with more sophisticated tools such as skin prick testing and analysis of genes. Phase II publications are currently in preparation, including two on eczema co-authored by Hywel Williams and Carsten Flohr. Phase III is a repeat of Phase I carried out 5-7 years later, and will hopefully answer the question once and for all of whether eczema, asthma and hayfever are really on the increase worldwide, or whether these diseases are decreasing in some countries and increasing in others. The full results of ISAAC Phase III and the world secular trends in allergic disease will be available in late 2005.