Can fluticasone be effective in the treatment of persistent cough?

Cough is the most frequent respiratory symptom presented to general practitioners. It is usually associated with other symptoms and clinical or functional abnormalities of the respiratory tract, and for this reason its treatment is directed to its cause. Therefore, apart from centrally acting drugs, cough does not require treatment “per se”; however, patients do sometimes request specific treatment. This study, based in a community primary healthcare centre, evaluated the efficacy of high-dose orally inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) in the treatment of persistent cough in subjects without asthma or other relevant acute or chronic respiratory diseases.

Methods
A total of 135 subjects suffering with cough for ≥2 weeks were given 500 μg b.i.d. fluticasone propionate (FP) for 2 weeks. Subjects then completed daily record cards of lower respiratory tract symptoms. The primary outcome was a decrease in mean total daily cough score during the 2nd week of treatment.

Results
The cough score decreased from 3.8 to 1.4 in the FP group in the 2nd week, which was a significant effect when compared with the placebo group. However, this effect was only seen in non-smokers. Allergy, forced expiratory volume in one second and bronchial hyperreactivity (BHR) at baseline did not affect the efficacy of FP.

Conclusion
Anti-inflammatory treatment with the inhaled steroid FP reduces cough in otherwise healthy adults who do not smoke.

Original article