Title: Increasing prevalence of asthma, allergic rhinoconjunctivitis and eczema among schoolchildren: Three surveys during the period 1985-2008

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Body: Aim: The prevalence of asthma, allergic rhinoconjunctivitis (AR) and eczema among children have increased worldwide in the last decades, but recent studies disagree as to whether the prevalence is continuing to rise, or is leveling off or declining. The aim of this study was to assess time trends in a subarctic population. Methods: A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey was carried out in 2008 among children aged 7-14 years in random selected schools in Nordland County, Norway (n=4150). The results are compared with results from identical studies in 1985 (n=4870) and 1995 (n=4456). Results: The main findings were an increasing prevalence of asthma ever (7.3% in 1985 to 17.6% in 2008, p for trend < 0.001) and AR ever (15.9% in 1985 to 24.5% in 2008, p for trend < 0.001), while the prevalence of eczema ever, after an increase between 1985 and 1995, remained unchanged in the last time period. The prevalence of current asthma increased from 4.8% to 9.9%, the prevalence of current AR increased from 6.7% to 21.5% and the prevalence of current eczema increased from 6.4% to 13.5%, all between 1995 and 2008. Conclusion: A repeated cross-sectional survey between 1985-2008 documented an increasing prevalence of asthma ever and AR ever among schoolchildren (7-14 years), together with a considerably increase in current asthma, AR and eczema between 1995 and 2008.