

Not Everything That Wheezes Is Asthma

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Bird fancier's lung disease (BFLD), also known as bird breeder's lung; it is a type of hypersensitivity pneumonitis (HP) caused by exposure to avian antigens. It can present as acute to sub-acute hypersensitivity pneumonitis. If not recognized early, it can progress into the chronic/fibrotic form leading to respiratory failure and fatal consequences.

We present a case of a fifty-seven-year-old, non-smoking female who presented with dry cough and dyspnea. She had been previously diagnosed with asthma. She is on combined inhaled corticosteroids and long-acting beta 2 agonist. Upon reviewing and carefully assessing the risk factors, diagnosis of BFLD was made. She showed significant improvement with prednisolone treatment and avoiding exposure to the antigen.

A history of exposure to birds, especially in non-smoking females, should alert the treating physician to the possibility of BFLD. This case illustrates how HP is being misdiagnosed as asthma and how a wheeze can mislead the physician into diagnosing asthma in a patient with significant history of exposure to birds.