



ASTHMA

A PUBLICATION
OF THE OFFICE
OF RADIATION AND
INDOOR AIR

B U L L E T I N



Welcome to the first issue of the Asthma Newsletter!

This newsletter—one of many new EPA publications aimed at increasing the national awareness of asthma—will provide you with information on issues such as current and upcoming grants, partnerships and events related to the EPA asthma initiative.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the incidence of asthma among school-age children increased by an alarming 160 percent between 1980 and 1994. Studies have also recognized the disproportionate effect that asthma has on children, especially those living in urban, low-income communities. In response, federal agencies formed an interagency Task Force on Environmental Health and Safety Risks to Children. In 1998, this task force identified childhood asthma as a priority area in need of immediate attention, including identification, assessment, and prevention of asthma triggers.

As part of this effort, EPA launched numerous initiatives and developed programs to address indoor environmental triggers and management of asthma. These initiatives include special events, media outreach, public education, grant, communications, and research programs.

World Asthma Day 2002

Asthma organizations, health agencies and state and federal governments sponsored a variety of asthma-related community outreach and educational activities throughout May in recognition of Asthma Awareness Month. On World Asthma Day, May 7, 2002, EPA sponsored an event at George Mason Elementary School in Alexandria, Virginia, to educate children about asthma. At the event, EPA honored Kim Gosselin, for authoring several children's books on asthma including *Taking Asthma to School*; WGBH Boston, for producing the "Buster's Breathless" episode of the popular PBS children's show, *ARTHUR*; and Robin Wallin, School Nurse at George Mason Elementary School, for her efforts to educate children on asthma triggers and management. In addition, EPA generated over 200 state and local asthma events. Visit the web site at www.epa.gov/iaq/asthma/wad2002.html for a recap of the day's events. **World Asthma Day 2003 is May 6.** To obtain an event planning kit to assist you in planning World Asthma Day 2003 activities, visit EPA's web site at www.epa.gov/asthma. For more information on World Asthma Day, contact U.S. EPA's Brenda Doroski at 202-564-9764.

EPA GOLDFISH Media Campaign: A Huge Success

The *Goldfish* national media campaign produced by the EPA and the Ad Council ranked in the top ten for donated media value in 2001, according to a recent analysis by Media Marketplace. After one year of circulation, the campaign received the value of some \$72 million in donations from television, radio, print and billboard media. Based on a child's description of an asthma attack, the campaign was launched with the message "I feel like a fish with no water" and the image of a grounded goldfish as the icon. The campaign was produced in both English and Spanish which included Web banners and alternative media like closed circuit programming. The campaign was presented the Crain Award in honor of its outstanding success in raising national awareness for children's asthma.

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A web site, www.noattacks.org, and toll-free hotline, 1-866-NO-ATTACKS, are provided for the campaign to offer technical support, advice to callers and address community concerns of childhood asthma. Over 350,000 web site hits and over 12,000 hotline calls have been generated by the campaign. The next wave of the Goldfish campaign is expected to be released in Spring 2003. For more information, contact U.S. EPA's Kristy Miller at 202-564-9441.

2002 Symposium on Asthma and the Environment

The 2002 Community Asthma Coalition Symposium, entitled "Asthma and the Environment," was held during the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP)'s annual meeting on November 6-7, 2002, in San Diego, CA. This event was sponsored by ACCP and the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP), with support from EPA and the California Endowment Fund. Sessions highlighted the importance of asthma management by patients and families, and focused on identifying and eliminating allergens and asthma triggers from indoor and outdoor environments. Attendees, including health professionals and school personnel, shared experiences in managing asthma from one community to another, discussed current trends, and identified best practices for managing asthma by reducing exposure to environmental triggers. In addition, the Symposium equipped attendees to better serve as local leaders in asthma management through organized coalitions and educational campaigns. For more information about the Symposium, contact U.S. EPA's Kim Smith at 202-564-9443.

EPA and AAHP Educate Health Plans on Environmental Triggers

In support of their *Taking on Asthma* Initiative, the American Association of Health Plans (AAHP) was recently awarded funding support from EPA. Through this initiative, a joint effort with the American Association of Asthma, Allergy, and Immunology (AAAAI), AAHP seeks to educate its members—representatives from over 1,000 managed health plans—on the importance of implementing a standard of care for asthma management in clinics and ways to encourage environmental management of asthma and indoor asthma triggers to reduce health risks posed by poor indoor air. EPA funding will help AAHP to develop products (including a best practices manual) and offer services (including a grant program to provide seed money for health plans to execute innovative patient education programs). In addition, they will develop Web-based training modules for health plan providers and case managers to enhance chronic disease management programs in managed care organizations, ultimately improving the quality, effectiveness and value of clinical health care. For more information, contact U.S. EPA's Katrin Kral at 202-564-9454.

BPHC and EPA Continue Asthma Collaborative to Improve Clinical Care for Patients

In March 2000, the Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined together to work on *Action Against Asthma*. This three-phased program is integrating environmental asthma management into core clinical asthma programs of community health centers. Through this effort, EPA and BPHC provide funding, technical assistance, and infrastructure support to participating community health centers; track and report patient outcomes; develop a network of health directors to provide technical assistance to centers through onsite visits, conference calls and a list-serv. BPHC's network of clinics serve more than 40 million children and families who are medically underserved.

More than 5,000 patients learned techniques to manage environmental asthma triggers during the first two phases of the program. Participating health centers successfully established infrastructure support at national, state, local and community levels to educate patients as well as other community health centers. To evaluate the program's success, indicators such as asthma severity, the number of symptom-free days, the number of patients implementing environmental management of asthma, and the number of school days missed due to asthma episodes are measured. For more information, contact U.S. EPA's Sheila Brown at 202-564-9439.

UMSPH Project Will Evaluate Best Practices for Asthma Intervention

EPA recently funded The University of Michigan School of Public Health's (UMSPH) Asthma Research Collaborative to evaluate the results of asthma management programs and identify best practices. Through this asthma health outcomes project, UMSPH will convene an expert panel and establish criteria for evaluating comprehensive federal, state, community and local asthma intervention programs through an Asthma Health Outcomes Project. Utilizing the University's internal and community network of asthma researchers and experts in the field of public health, pediatrics, internal medicine, and pharmacy, the panel will evaluate programs in terms of health outcomes and self management of asthma to document best practices and program implementation guidelines. In addition, program coordinators for EPA's Children's Asthma Initiative will leverage the best practices and guidelines to design and implementation of effective asthma management programs of the federal and state levels. For more information on the UMSPH Asthma Health Outcomes Project, contact U.S. EPA's Tracey Mitchell at 202-564-9446 or Alisa Smith at 202-564-9372.

EPA Grants Support Fight Against Children's Asthma

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded In-Home Asthma Environmental Education and Management Grants this year to the Toledo Children's Hospital in Ohio and the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York City to help in the fight against childhood asthma. These two programs complement the efforts of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, which in 2000 won an EPA grant to expand its in-home visit and intervention project. Taken together, the three pilot projects provide models for the types of local, innovative, community-based health initiatives needed to tackle childhood asthma head on.

These pilot projects will raise awareness and reduce the impact of environmental triggers on children with asthma. They also strengthen the capacity of families to eliminate or control asthma triggers in the home, such as secondhand smoke, dust mites, cockroaches, mold, and pet dander. The ultimate goal is to enable every child with asthma to lead a healthy and active life with fewer emergency room visits, asthma symptom days, and days lost from school.

Mount Sinai School of Medicine Addresses Environmental Asthma Triggers

EPA's grant to the school's *Healthy Homes, Healthy Families Project* serves to ensure that asthma is managed comprehensively using both clinical care and patient education approaches. In collaboration with the East Harlem Asthma Workgroup, the medical school will coordinate the *Healthy Homes, Healthy Families Project* to provide home and group intervention to families living in the culturally diverse, inner city communities in East Harlem, NY, where asthma rates are extremely high.

The grant will allow Mount Sinai to provide environmental asthma education, management and follow-up in groups as well as one on one mediation and education for 40 families. The Healthy Homes project will demonstrate the benefit of in-home asthma education and management as a means of reducing the frequency and intensity of asthma attacks and the medical costs of hospital visits. For more information, contact U.S. EPA's Sheila Brown at 202-564-9439.

Toledo Children's Hospital Initiates In-Home Asthma Education

EPA's grant supports asthma education initiatives including the hospital's Pediatric Pulmonary Center and asthma intervention model. The Center serves 23 counties in northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan, and receives more than 2,540 visits each year from children living with asthma—the second leading cause for all admissions to the hospital.

This grant will help program directors to expand the existing intervention model to include a home environmental asthma education initiative in which eighty children and their families will participate. Home assessments will include education sessions to help families identify and reduce common asthma triggers found in the home environment—secondhand smoke, cockroaches, dust mites, mold, pet dander, more—and ultimately improve family management of children's asthma, reducing emergency room visits, hospitalizations, asthma attacks and the need for rescue medication. For more information, contact U.S. EPA's Tracey Mitchell at 202-564-9446.

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Expands Home Visitor Program

In 2000, EPA provided a grant to the hospital's Community Asthma Prevention Program (CAPP) to expand the hospital's home visit and intervention project for children's asthma management. CAPP provides community-based education, training, and environmental intervention, primarily in poor, urban communities. Working with EPA, CAPP expanded their innovative, randomized and controlled study program that evaluates environmental triggers of asthma and methods of mitigation in the home.

Eligible families received educational materials, in-home visits, follow up referrals, and general advice to clarify the urgency of identifying and removing environmental triggers to reduce the risk of asthma attacks. CAPP purchased materials, such as roach and mice bait, dusters, mattress pads, etc., for families participating in the study to help them eliminate environmental triggers in their homes. Though families were responsible for implementing cleaning practices and some infrastructure upgrades (e.g., replacing carpets with floor tiles), CAPP provided the majority of the necessary funding, materials and training to help families make healthy changes to their lifestyles and in-home environments. Preliminary results indicate that families have experienced a decline in emergency room visits and hospitalizations. For more information, contact U.S. EPA's Sheila Brown at 202-564-9439.

For Further Information

For more information about EPA's Asthma Education and Outreach Program, visit EPA's web site at www.epa.gov/asthma.

We hope you have found the first edition of the Asthma Bulletin informative and useful. We want to hear from you! If you have ideas, projects, or events that you would like to highlight, please submit them to asthmabulletin@cadmusgroup.com.



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