

ASTHMA HEALTH OUTCOMES PROJECT

www.AlliesAgainstAsthma/AHOP

BACKGROUND

Asthma, a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways, is a major public health problem of increasing concern in the United States. According to the most recent data available, between 1980 and 1994 the prevalence of asthma increased 75% overall and 74% among children 5 to 14 years of age. It now affects some 15 million Americans, including nearly 5 million people who are younger than 8 years of age.¹

In the past decade there have been significant advances in asthma management, giving most people with asthma the opportunity to live active and healthy lives. Recommendations for diagnosing and treating asthma have been translated by the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) into guidelines for patient care and have been distributed widely. These guidelines emphasize not only quality medical care and support for patient management of symptoms, but also note that a reduction in exposure to environmental allergens such as house dust-mites, cockroaches, animal dander, tobacco smoke, and mold can reduce the frequency and severity of asthma attacks.² Despite these advances, many children continue to suffer with asthma.

In response to the increase in the prevalence of asthma, recent years have seen a proliferation of programs and services aimed at improving the health and quality of life of people with asthma. Efforts have ranged from local, community-based efforts with limited funding to multi-million dollar, national initiatives. The complexity of asthma has also shaped the variety of approaches designed to address the disease. As growing evidence demonstrates, genetics, clinical care, environmental factors, and social conditions all contribute to asthma morbidity. While some interventions have focused on a single factor, a growing number of efforts have taken an integrated approach, utilizing various strategies to address multiple aspects of the disease.

To better understand what makes asthma programs successful, the Asthma Health Outcomes Project (AHOP) at the Center for Managing Chronic Disease, University of Michigan School of Public Health (UMSPH) was created and funded under a cooperative agreement with the Indoor Environments Division of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The project developed and implemented a process to identify common themes and features of asthma programs that include an environmental component and have reported a positive impact on asthma-related outcomes. This unique effort reached beyond the peer-reviewed literature, to identify community-level asthma programs and services around the country and internationally. By looking across the breadth of successful programs, AHOP has identified factors associated with success including *which* activities are associated with successful programs, and *how* they were implemented.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/asthma/children.htm>

² National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Expert Panel Report 2: Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma, National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, July 1997

ASTHMA HEALTH OUTCOMES PROJECT PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Initial data analysis identified a number of programmatic factors associated with successfully improving health outcomes:

- Programs that tailored their programs in response to individuals' needs, particularly with regard to sensitivity and exposure to environmental triggers, were more likely to report improving health outcomes.
- Programs that worked with health care providers were more likely to report a positive impact on health outcomes.
- Programs that were intentionally designed to meet the needs of the community were more likely to report a positive impact on health outcomes.
- Programs that had close ties to the individuals and communities they were attempting to assist were more likely to report a positive impact on health outcomes.
- Programs that collaborated with other agencies or institutions were more likely to report a positive impact on health outcomes.

AHOP STUDY DETAILS

- Identified programs in 30 countries and 46 US states
- Included programs that focused on asthma, included an environmental component, and measured health outcomes
- Implemented an extensive outreach effort to reach beyond the peer-reviewed literature to include community-level asthma programs
- Identified more than 400 programs
- Gathered additional data on 223 programs reporting a positive impact on health outcomes
- Gathered information through published articles, program documents, and in-depth phone interviews
- Conducted preliminary analysis on 111 programs that had published results in peer-reviewed literature
- Will conduct additional analyses through 2006

For more information:

www.AlliesAgainstAsthma.net/AHOP

www.epa.gov/asthma