

Washington State Offers New Asthma Management Desktop Tool

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Asthma is a serious disease that affects people of all ages. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified asthma prevalence in Washington among the highest in the nation. About 400,000 adults and 120,000 youth in Washington have asthma and this translates into one in 10 households with children, one in 10 women, and one in 14 men. Because of advances in asthma treatment, the death rate is steadily dropping. At the same time, health care resources for people with uncontrolled asthma are climbing.

One of the new health care resources available to asthma sufferers and their providers are important new asthma care guidelines.

The 440 page Expert Panel Report 3 (EPR-3), released by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute in 2007, gives systematic guidance on optimal care for children and adults with asthma.

To summarize this voluminous report for use by providers, patients and other interested parties, the Washington Asthma Initiative and the Washington State Department of Health prepared a helpful six-page, easy-to-use reference tool called “Good Asthma Care on a Desert Island.”

“Good Asthma Care on a Desert Island” is a quick desktop reference for providers and staff to have asthma guidelines readily available. The guide includes the Four Pillars of Asthma Management, Asthma Stepwise Approach, Assessing Asthma Severity, and Assessing Asthma Control. There are recommendations for age-appropriate pharmacotherapy, translating spirometry results, and integrating environmental control.

Keeping asthma in good control is important for many reasons. Each year, about 48,000 adults with asthma make at least one emergency department visit, and 100,000 make at least one urgent medical visit for worsening asthma symptoms. More than 5,000 people are

hospitalized. Medicare or Medicaid pays for more than half of those hospitalizations. Youth with asthma miss school more often. Those with more severe, uncontrolled asthma tend to have more academic challenges than those with asthma that is controlled.

The good news is we are seeing many advances in medication and best practices in the last few years that make asthma control more successful. These new guidelines are slowly making their way to providers through the Washington State Patient-Centered Medical Home Collaborative and the Washington State Asthma Program. Training programs are offered through the University of Washington and the Washington Healthy Communities Resource Center.

You can download “Good Asthma Care on a Desert Island” at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/asthma/providers/default.htm> and links to EPR-3 reports and other useful documents and information are also available on the site.

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