

March 2015

AE-C PROGRAMS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Utilization of Certified Asthma Educators

by the Children's Hospital of Georgia

by Cliff Dennis, RRT, AE-C

From September 2006 through November 2006, the East Central Health District of Georgia experienced four pediatric asthma deaths. One of the findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during their investigation of what led to these deaths was a lack of asthma education and awareness. In order to address this gap and the subsequent recommendation to improve asthma education and awareness in our community, our institution investigated which individuals would be the most qualified to provide asthma education and found that Certified Asthma Educators (AE-C) were best suited for that role.

Georgia Regents Medical Center (GR Health) - Children's Hospital of Georgia currently has eleven Certified Asthma Educators on staff. Three AE-Cs were recipients of NAECB scholarships, including one AE-C who currently serves on the board of the NAECB. We utilize certified asthma educators to provide inpatient asthma education, outpatient asthma education, and community asthma education. Our certified asthma educators create all of the asthma action plans for both the inpatient and outpatient populations.

We also work with the Georgia Asthma Control Program (GACP) to provide asthma education throughout Georgia through three different programs:

- Georgia Asthma Management Education in Childcare Settings (GAME-CS) was developed to provide childcare centers with a three step process to better equip staff to care for children with asthma and to provide those caring for these children a better understanding about pathophysiology, medical management and asthma in general. To date, we have provided GAME-CS training to well over 400 childcare workers throughout the state of Georgia. The certified asthma educators from GR-Health provide these classes to childcare centers across the state.
- Our certified asthma educators also conduct the American Lung Association's "Asthma 101" training for elementary school teachers and staff members on an on-going basis. This one-hour course provides a background on asthma and how it is treated and the role teachers and administrative staff can play in caring for these students with asthma in the school setting. We have provided over 300 hours of "Asthma 101"

training throughout the eleven-county East Central Health District.

- Our certified asthma educators also work to address the variations in asthma care provided by clinicians by conducting Physician Asthma Care Education (PACE) trainings throughout the state of Georgia. This program reviews the current Expert Panel Report-3 (EPR-3) guidelines for diagnosis, management and treatment of asthma. This course also reviews communication strategies, as well as billing and coding questions.

Through our community asthma education services, our certified asthma educators provide community asthma awareness events, working with community and corporate sponsors. We provide pulmonary screenings, education and asthma kits to participants. We remain active in the community and have provided over 50 different asthma events since 2007.

Utilization of Certified Asthma Educators by the Asthma Network of West Michigan

by Karen Meyerson, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, AE-C

The Asthma Network of West Michigan (ANWM) was formed in 1994 in response to growing concern over pediatric asthma morbidity and mortality and is now a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The current program focuses on children and adults with moderate to severe asthma, primarily in families with low incomes. ANWM case management services for these population groups include home visits, school/daycare visits, clinician care conferences to obtain a written asthma action plan, and medical social worker visits to assist families with psychosocial barriers to asthma management.

In 1999, ANWM conducted a pilot program with 34 school-aged children

with moderate to severe asthma, providing home-based education, environmental assessments and resources to reduce exposures to asthma triggers. The program demonstrated significant reductions in hospital admissions and length-of-stay, a cost savings of \$55,000 from one year to the next in facility charges. After two years of the pilot program, ANWM took their data to Priority Health, the largest payer in west Michigan, and asked them to refer their most at-risk patients to the pilot for case management for a one year trial period. The one year demonstration was successful and Priority Health agreed to enter into an agreement with the program.

Under this contract - the first known between a grassroots coalition and a health plan - Priority Health agreed to reimburse home asthma education visits at the standard Medicaid rate for a skilled nursing visit. An ANWM case manager must be either a registered nurse (RN) or a registered respiratory therapist (RRT), as well as a certified asthma educator (AE-C), or must become a certified asthma educator within a year of employment - a certification ANWM subsidizes. ANWM staff provides home-based

education, home environmental assessments, resources to reduce exposures to environmental asthma triggers and social work support.

Four of Michigan's largest payers now reimburse for home-based education and environmental assessments. Each patient is allowed six-18 separate reimbursable visits to provide necessary asthma management education to individuals with asthma and their caregivers in various locations. An analysis conducted in 2003-2005 showed case-managed individuals experienced 60% fewer emergency department visits, 66% fewer hospitalizations, and 46% shorter length of stay for hospitalized patients.

In 2014, clients who received asthma services through the Children's Healthcare Access Program (CHAP), the medical home pilot in Kent County which refers children with asthma to ANWM, experienced: a 71% decrease in exposure to smoke in the home environment, a decrease in

the average number of school days missed (due to asthma) from 8.1 to 0.2, and a 59% increase in Asthma Action Plans, compared to rates before receiving CHAP asthma services.

Also in 2014, the Asthma Network's largest payer saw a 43% reduction in hospital admissions for members served through ANWM from 2012 through 2013.

Michigan MATCH

The **M**anaging **A**sthma **T**hrough **C**ase Management in **H**omes (MATCH) case management model began with the Asthma Network of West Michigan. Recognizing the success of the ANWM asthma case management program, the Michigan Department of Community Health Asthma Prevention and Control Program pursued replicating the program

in other areas of the state with the capacity and burden to sustain such a program. Participants in this evaluation were from three well-established MATCH programs: the Asthma Network of West Michigan, Hurley Medical Center (Genesee County) and St. Joseph Mercy Health System (Washtenaw County).

The MATCH model included at least 6 home visits by a certified asthma educator (AE-C). These visits involved assessment of asthma triggers, consultation about how to reduce asthma triggers, and evaluation of the participant's asthma exacerbations. Data collected at the intake, discharge and post-discharge visits consisted of health care utilization, medication, symptom management, and impact on daily activities.

Preliminary outcomes from the MATCH sites were similar to those of the Asthma Network of West Michigan. When the MATCH model was replicated in other Michigan communities, participants benefitted from

greater control over asthma exacerbations.

Do you have an asthma program led by certified asthma educator(s) that you would like to highlight in our monthly newsletter? Please send your story to: info@naecb.org

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