New MAC Coordinators!

Lori Saari is the new Coordinator for the Northeast Regional Asthma Coalition (NERAC). She is a public health nurse who has worked for St. Louis County for over 15 years. She previously led an Immunization Coalition in southern St. Louis County. She’s also been a labor and delivery nurse and taught prenatal education classes. In addition to her NERAC Coordinator role, she continues to work at St. Louis County in WIC. She can be reached at: SaariD@aol.com.

Lisa Gibbon is the new Coordinator for the Northwest Regional Asthma Coalition (NWRAC). She is a RN who has worked in a variety of settings for many years. She is completing her work as the Asthma Grant Coordinator at the Cass Lake Indian Health Service. In addition to her job as NWRAC Coordinator, she is pursuing a Family Nurse Practitioner degree from South Dakota State University. She can be reached at: nursegibbon@yahoo.com.

What’s Inside?

• Coaches Program is Here!
• Asthma and the Flu
• MAC Sucesses
• MDH Staff Honors
• We’ve Moved to St. Paul!

New report describes burden of asthma in Minnesota

Overall rates are lower than national rates; however, disparities exist

The Minnesota Department of Health Asthma Program released a new report on the burden of asthma in Minnesota. Among other things, the report describes asthma prevalence, asthma-related hospitalizations, quality of life for people with asthma, and asthma mortality. Overall, Minnesota’s asthma rates are lower than national rates; however, disparities affect certain segments of the population. Most significantly, there are large disparities in asthma hospitalization rates between those who live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and the rest of the state. The data in this report can be used to help develop asthma education programs, plan asthma interventions, and inform policymaking. The report’s findings include:

Asthma Prevalence

• An estimated 6.8% of Minnesota adults currently have asthma. That translates to an estimated 255,000 adult Minnesotans.
• An estimated 7.9% of Minnesota children age 0-17 are reported to have asthma, which is equivalent to more than 98,000 Minnesota children.

Health Care Utilization

• Asthma hospitalization rates among children under 5 in Minneapolis are almost 50% higher than the national average. School survey data from greater Minnesota suggest that asthma is also having an impact in rural areas of the state in terms of symptoms and missed days from school and other activities.

Quality of Life

• Nearly 18% of Minnesota adults with asthma reported one or more days in the past year in which their activities were limited due to asthma.
• 19.5% of families with children who have asthma reported being greatly or moderately affected by their child’s health condition.

Asthma and Flu Shots

• Annual flu shots are recommended for people with asthma, according to federal guidelines for asthma management. In Minnesota, adults with asthma are more likely to report receiving a flu shot in the past year than those without asthma. However, only 40% of those with asthma reported receiving a flu shot in 2003.

Obesity and Smoking

• Adults with asthma are more likely than those without asthma to be obese.
• Adults with asthma are just as likely to smoke cigarettes as those without asthma. Smoking can trigger asthma symptoms.

All Minnesotans need to be familiar with the symptoms of asthma and the proper control of the disease. People with asthma who experience any of the following should question if their asthma is under control and should see a health care provider:

1. if you use a rescue inhaler more than twice a week for asthma symptoms, or
2. if you wake up at night with asthma symptoms more than twice a month, or
3. if you use more than two canisters of rescue medication (such as albuterol) in a year.

Upcoming Events
Southwest Regional Asthma Coalition (SWRAC)
“Improving the Lives of Our Patients with Asthma: Asthma Interventions for Busy Pharmacists”
Date: February 2006
Location: Rice Memorial Hospital, Willmar, MN
Presenter: Don Uden, Pharm D. of the University of Minnesota
For more info and to register: Amy Roggenbuck at aaroggen@farmerstel.net or 303-598-7313

MDH Staff involved in National Activities
Congratulations to Susan Ross, Asthma Clinical Advisor, who was invited to join the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program’s (NAEPP) Guidelines Implementation Panel (GIP). NAEPP is within the National Institutes of Health. This panel met on November 17, 2005, in Washington, DC. Members of the panel shared their diverse, individual experiences with implementing the guidelines. They started to discuss a framework for improvements to the implementation of the guidelines and how to make it user-friendly.

Congratulations to Wendy Brunner, Asthma Surveillance Epidemiologist, who was asked to serve on the Asthma Workgroup of the State Environmental Health Indicators Collaborative, as part of the CDC Environmental Public Health Tracking initiative. She went to Atlanta for a meeting in September, at which the participants began working on “how to” guides for states to use to track environmental health indicators including asthma hospitalizations and mortality rates.

Watch ECHO TV each month on TPT
ECHO, Emergency and Community Health Outreach, is run by the ECHO Regional Collaborative to provide limited-English speaking residents with life-saving information about important health and safety topics by using a variety of communication methods. They have monthly health awareness and emergency preparedness educational programs on Twin Cities Public Television. ECHO-TV currently reaches six ethnic audiences including Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese on Channel 17. In December they will be airing a 20-minute program called “Asthma and Respiratory Diseases.” Please see the schedule and languages below. You can also visit the ECHO-Web at http://www.echominnesota.org.

“Asthma and Respiratory Diseases”
December 24, 2005  December 31, 2005
Spanish 11:00pm  Lao 11:00pm
Hmong 11:20pm  Cambodian 11:20pm
Vietnamese 11:40pm  Somali 11:40pm

Controlling Asthma Triggers in Schools: A New Tool Yields Measurable Improvements
Can school officials implement an indoor air quality (IAQ) asthma management plan that results in measurable improvements? The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Indoor Air Unit explored this question in a project funded by a Minnesota legislative grant. A Model School Environmental Asthma Management Plan (MSEAMP) was developed as a new tool to evaluate and improve school IAQ and reduce environmental triggers of asthma.

The MSEAMP was used in 10 schools, six of which were re-evaluated after implementation. Improvements were observed in these six schools. Pet allergen levels declined significantly; 70% of the areas sampled had lower levels after the intervention. Moreover, staff perception of air quality improved in five schools. The findings indicate that implementing this plan can yield modest and measurable improvements in air quality and reduce certain environmental asthma triggers. MDH is currently collaborating with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency for further analysis of the data.

A summary report and the MSEAMP are available at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/schools/plan/asthmaplan.htm. A booklet and compact disc version of these documents are also available. Please contact Dan Tranter with any questions or comments (email: daniel.tranter@health.state.mn.us; phone: 651-201-4618).

Asthma and Influenza: There is still plenty of time to get your shot!
Respiratory infections like influenza are more serious in patients with asthma as they can lead to pneumonia and acute respiratory disease. Thus, all people with asthma should get an annual flu shot as part of their routine care. Flu shots obtained in December will provide adequate protection through most of the flu season because influenza disease in Minnesota typically peaks in February or even later. MDH officials announced that there is an adequate supply of vaccines this year. More information on influenza and clinic locations can be found on the MDH web site at www.mdhflu.com or on the American Lung Association web site at http://www.flucliniclocator.org.
Winning With Asthma: Program for Coaches

The Coaches Asthma Clipboard program, “WinningWithAsthma” will be available in December 2005. This program is an educational tool specifically designed to educate coaches and referees on asthma and its effects on the ability of team members to fully participate in sports. This internet-based program was developed through a collaborative effort of the Minnesota and Utah Departments of Health Asthma Programs and funded by the STEPS initiative.

This innovative program runs approximately 30 minutes and will be accessible online at www.WinningWithAsthma.org. Coaches and referees will take short pre- and post- tests before and after viewing the program. Those who watch the program and complete the brief test will receive a “Coaches Asthma Clipboard,” which lists the urgent asthma steps on the back, and a booklet, which expands on how to help an athlete properly manage asthma.

If you have questions please contact Susan Ross, RN, AE-C, with the MDH Asthma Program at 651-201-5629 or email susan.ross@health.state.mn.us.

Successful Regional MAC Events

South Central Regional Asthma Coalition (SCRAC)
The SCRAC members have been on the road providing trainings throughout the region. As the word spread, the training requests rolled in. Trainings were offered to all school staff at both public and private schools. SCRAC members provided asthma management training to more than 200 school personnel in Brown County alone. The Caring for Kids With Asthma training was offered twice in September and once in October. So far, SCRAC has trained more than 150 child care professionals throughout the region. For more information about training opportunities or opportunities for involvement, please contact Erin Simmons at scasthma@hickorytech.net.

East Central Regional Asthma Coalition (ECRAC)
A Bee Healthy Children’s Health Fair (the theme was centered around bees) took place at Fairview Wyoming Hospital on Saturday, September 17, 2005, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Coalition had an asthma booth at this fair with the theme “Bee Better Breathers.” They did peak flow tests for 40 children. Children received bubbles and materials on how to manage their asthma, and adults received information on joining MAC. There were approximately 200 children at this fair. If you would like to know more or participate in future ECRAC activities, please contact Lori Swanson at lori.swanson@co.kanabec.mn.us.

Southwest Regional Asthma Coalition (SWRAC)
SWRAC offered a successful Asthma Management Training at the end of August, with Dr. Amy Ellingson of the Allergy and Asthma Specialty Clinic presenting. The training was held in partnership with Rice Memorial Hospital of Willmar. The doctors, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals in attendance were given important information on the application of therapeutic skills for asthma. The Southwest Region is planning for similar trainings, so watch for information in future Breathing Space issues! For more information about SWRAC activities, please contact Amy Roggenbuck at aaroggen@farmerstel.net.

Metro Minnesota Asthma Coalition (MMAC)
The MMAC joined forces with the Minneapolis Urban League to sponsor an asthma screening event on Saturday, October 29, 2005. The event was part of The Nationwide Asthma Screening Program, developed in cooperation with two patient support organizations: the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America and the Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics. Many MMAC members donated their time and talent to this event. Twenty-five individuals received asthma screenings and 17 received a flu shot. Participants were young and old, insured and uninsured. In addition to establishing strong team connections, the coalition saw how their combined efforts make a difference in individual lives. For more information about MMAC activities, please contact Sally Smaida at sally.smaida@mnpca.org.

Central Minnesota Regional Asthma Coalition (CMRAC)
Dr. Miles Weinberger was the featured speaker at CMRAC’s first annual lecture, held November 10, 2005, in St. Cloud with 30 participants. Dr. Weinberger, Professor of Pediatrics, University of Iowa, is also the Director of Pediatric Allergy and Pulmonary Division and Director of the University of Iowa Cystic Fibrosis Center. Dr. Weinberger’s presentation, “Asthma: Evidence-based Essentials for Effective and Efficient Management,” was targeted at family practice physicians, pediatricians, and allergy and asthma specialists in the central Minnesota region. For more information on CMRAC activities, please contact Kathleen Milligan at milliganala@yahoo.com.

For more events, check out the NEWLY designed MAC website at www.mnasthma.org.
BREATHING SPACE, a quarterly respiratory disease newsletter, is produced by the Minnesota Department of Health Asthma Program. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide health professionals, school nurses, and community members with current research, information, and resources on respiratory disease.

This newsletter is supported by Grant/Cooperative Agreement #U59/CCU522470 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

Questions about lung health?
Call 1-800-548-8252
American Lung Association Call Center

We’ve Moved! New MDH Asthma Staff Contact Information:
Asthma Program Telephone Number: 651-201-5909
Toll Free Number: 1-877-925-4189
Asthma Web Site: http://www.health.state.mn.us/asthma/

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