Recommendations of the Work-Related Asthma Advisory Workgroup

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended in 2005 that Work-Related Asthma (WRA) be incorporated into the current Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Asthma Program activities. MDH agreed and in September 2005, MDH convened and facilitated an external advisory workgroup.

The Work-Related Asthma Advisory Workgroup was charged with assessing the issues, determining the priorities, and making recommendations to deal with WRA, including strategies to support asthma self-management and minimize exposures in the work environment. This workgroup came together for five meetings over seven months to discuss WRA in Minnesota. It developed a strategic plan and completed its work in November.

Nationally, approximately 15% of adult asthma is attributable to occupational factors (American Thoracic Society, 2003) and WRA costs approximately $1.6 billion (direct and indirect) annually (Leigh JP, Romano PS et al., 2002). Approximately 350 agents are associated with WRA.

In 2005, 11.8% of Minnesota adults (444,049 people) had ever been told by a doctor that they have asthma (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005). Given the American Thoracic Society estimate of 15%, potentially 66,600 Minnesota adults have asthma that is attributable to occupational factors. With this in mind the workgroup formulated the following recommendations by identifying three overarching goals:

- Increase awareness about WRA and about identifying and documenting WRA,
- Improve information on WRA in Minnesota to tailor interventions, and
- Reduce exposures to asthmagens.

MDH will work with the WRA Advisory Workgroup members and partner with local organizations to achieve the goals identified by this workgroup. The Environment Workgroup which is developing recommendations for the revised state asthma plan is also incorporating this information. MDH greatly appreciates the members input, time, and commitment to this process and product. We would like to formally thank all of them!
(continued from page 1) - Work-Related Asthma Advisory Workgroup Members:

David Abrams, CIH — ARS Environmental Health, Inc
Beth Baker, MD, MPH – Regions Hospital, Occupational & Environmental Medicine
Lisa Brosseau, ScD, CIH – University of Minnesota, School of Public Health
Wendy Brunner, MS – Minnesota Department of Health
Dana Dickson, MIS, CIH, CSP – Unisys Corporation
Barbara Gibson, MD, MPH – 3M Company
Susan Graca, RN, BSN – The Valspar Corporation
Ian Greaves, MD – University of Minnesota, School of Public Health
Clayton Handt, MIS – Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry OSHA
Jean Johnson, MS, PhD – Minnesota Department of Health
Richard Johnston – Minnesota Finishing Trades
Steve Kirkhorn, MD, MPH, FACOEM – National Farm Medicine Center
William Lohman, MD – Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry
Dave Mlakar – Steelworkers Union
Elizabeth Shogren, RN – Minnesota Nurses Association
Allan Williams, MPH, PhD – Minnesota Department of Health

The WRA Advisory Group was staffed by Subha Chandar and Laura Oatman.
The strategic plan, the plan fact sheet, and WRA fact sheet may be found on the
MDH Asthma Program Web site at: www.health.state.mn.us/asthma.

Please contact Laura Oatman at laura.oatman@health.state.mn.us or
651-201-5914 for questions or to partner with the WRA Advisory Workgroup
on any of the items in the strategic plan.

Why Don’t We Do It in Our Sleeves??!!

In this season of coughs and
colds, you may enjoy and also
find helpful the short video at:
http://www.coughsafe.com/
index.html.

It’s entitled “Why Don’t We Do
It in Our Sleeves.” It’s funny
and provides great information
on how to prevent the spread of
respiratory diseases which may
trigger asthma. It’s very suit-
able for viewing by a group of
school children or others!!

New Report on
Childhood Asthma

On Dec. 12, 2006, the CDC
released a new report on child-
hood asthma which showed that
death rates for asthma among
children under age 18 have
decreased since 1999, while
doctor visits for the condition
have more than doubled over
the past decade. The complete
report, entitled “The State of
Childhood Asthma, United
States: 1980-2005” is available
at www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ad/ad381.pdf

Asthma Hospitalization Rates in Minnesota
Are Decreasing

In 2005, there were more than 4,300 hospitalizations for asthma in
Minnesota, for an overall rate of 8.5 hospitalizations per 10,000 resi-
dents. The CDC has set a goal for state asthma programs of decreasing
asthma hospitalization rates by 16% between 2000 and 2009. Asthma
hospitalization rates have been decreasing in Minnesota, putting us well
on the way to meeting this target.

Asthma Hospitalization Rates, Minnesota, 1998-2005
State Asthma Plan Revision Update

The process of revising the original 5-year “Strategic Plan for Addressing Asthma in Minnesota” is underway, with four work groups and the MN Asthma Steering Committee hard at work. The four work groups are: Data - chaired by Dr. Barbara Yawn and staffed by Wendy Brunner; Environment - chaired by Dr. Bill Angell and staffed by Laura Oatman; Health Professional Education - chaired by Denise Herrmann and staffed by Susan Ross; and Individual/Family/Community - chaired by Dr. Karen Monsen and staffed by Erica Fishman. Each group has met twice and has developed or revised its goals and objectives. The Steering Committee, chaired by Dr. Don Uden, has met once and will be meeting again in January to begin melding the recommendations and information from the work groups.

Asthma Travelers

September: Wendy Brunner and Erica Fishman of MDH attended the CDC Asthma Grantee meeting in Atlanta where both presented as part of the conference program. Erica served on the conference planning committee.

Later in the month Erica attended the Community Health Service (CHS) conference. The asthma program had an exhibit which was visited by many of the conference participants.

October: Julie Kilpatrick from Washington County Public Health and Environment received a scholarship to attend the American College of Chest Physicians 8th annual Community Asthma and COPD Coalitions Symposium in Salt Lake City, where she displayed information on Washington County’s “Catching Our Breath” Asthma Initiative.

November: Karen Monsen of Washington County Public Health and Environment and Erica Fishman attended the American Public Health Association annual meeting in Boston where they hosted a roundtable, again with information on “Catching Our Breath”.

Susan Ross RN, AE-C, MDH, participated in the NHLBI - NAEPP-Asthma Guideline Implementation Advisory Panel. The panel is developing an implementation plan for the new asthma guidelines. The revised guidelines are expected to be released in 2007. Susan represents state health departments and RN’s at these meetings which were held at the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland.

December: Janet Keysser, MDH, was an invited speaker at the annual EPA Tools for Schools conference in Washington, DC, where she presented regarding Minnesota’s trainings for school personnel on “Managing Asthma in Minnesota Schools”. This information was published in the special asthma edition of the Journal of School Health (JOSH) in August 2006.
Minnesota Asthma Coalition (MAC) Update
The MAC is a statewide membership organization open to any person or organization committed to improving the lives of people with Asthma in Minnesota. This includes people with asthma and their families, health professionals, businesses, community organizations, and schools. Benefits of joining the MAC include:
- Being part of a local and statewide network of people and resources
- Having a voice on important asthma policies
- Being on the forefront of asthma education and training
- Opportunities for training
- Opportunities to be involved in asthma activities in your area and around the state!

For membership and other information, please visit the Minnesota Asthma Coalition Website at www.mnasthma.org

West Central Regional Asthma Coalition (WCRAC)
Contact Doreen Hanson for more information at 320-762-3043 or doreen.hanson@mail.co.douglas.mn.us
Next coalition meeting is March 20, 2007, from 12 noon to 1 PM. Meet at Douglas County Public Health or call in is available.

Southwest Regional Asthma Coalition (SWRAC)
Contact Amy Roggenbuck for more information at 320-568-2471 or aaroggen@farmerstel.net.
Next coalition meeting is Tuesday, January 09, 2007 from 7:00 PM until 8:00 PM at the Allergy & Asthma Specialty Clinic 1037 19th Avenue SW, Willmar

East Central Regional Asthma Coalition (ECRAC)
For more information contact Kathryn.Burski@co.kanabec.mn.us or 320-679-6438

Central Minnesota Regional Asthma Coalition (CMRAC)
For more information contact Kathleen Milligan at 320-253-6011 or milliganala@yahoo.com

Northeast Regional Asthma Coalition (NERAC)
For more information contact Lori Saari at saarid@aol.com or 218-391-3942.
Next coalition meeting is Wednesday, January 24, 2007, 3:00 PM until 4:00 PM, SMDC Regional Heart Conference Room, Duluth. Also, on January 22, 2007 a 2-hour school nurse update will be presented. 
Asthma for Busy Pharmacists training will be held on March 15, 2007.

South Central Regional Asthma Coalition (SCRAC)
Erin Simmons (the first coordinator for this region) has resigned from her position but says she will stay connected to the coalition. Until a new coordinator is hired, please contact Amy Roggenbuck, Regional MAC Coordinator, at 320-568-2471 or aaroggen@farmerstel.net

Metro Regional Asthma Coalition (Metro MAC)
For more information contact Neisha Reynolds at 651-268-7616 or neisha.reynolds@alamn.org

South East Minnesota Regional Asthma Coalition (SERAC)
For more information contact Judy Wothke at 507-453-0714 or jwothke@hbci.com. Please visit the website at http://www.mnasthma.org/mnasthma/serac to view some media activities!

Northwest Regional Asthma Coalition (NWRAC)
Plans are underway to provide coalition activities in the Northwest region. For more information contact Amy Roggenbuck, Regional MAC Coordinator at 320-568-2471 or aaroggen@farmerstel.net or Erica Fishman, MDH program coordinator at 651-281-5899 or Erica.fishman@health.state.mn.us
St. Francis Healthy Learner Asthma Initiative — With funding support from the American Lung Association, and programmatic support from the Metro Asthma Coalition, this initiative is a school-community, public-private partnership established to improve the health, education, and well being of students with asthma. The initiative in the St. Francis School District -ISD 15, uses the Healthy Learners Asthma Initiative, developed in Minneapolis Public Schools, as a model for program implementation and evaluation. An evaluation is an ongoing component of this initiative, and validated tools have been developed to assist in determining overall program effectiveness and sustainability. In January the Initiative will be conducting school and family surveys to identify specific program needs to provide comprehensive asthma education, awareness, and management. This is a four-year project, which will foster collaboration among a broad base of community stakeholders, including Anoka County Public Health.

Free COPD Program: A Primary Care Update Course
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is the 4th leading cause of death and the 2nd leading cause of disability in the United States. The number of people with COPD is increasing. More than 12 million people are currently diagnosed with COPD and an additional 12 million likely have the disease and don’t know it.

The American Lung Association of MN and the Minnesota Thoracic Society are presenting a free half-day program that will focus on the diagnosis and management of COPD by primary care providers. The course will cover four areas related to COPD: pathophysiology, smoking cessation, COPD management, and respiratory infections. This continuing medical education program is offered free of charge to primary care physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners with 3.25 CME credits being provided.

ALA will be offering free COPD CME half-day programs in Minneapolis, St. Cloud, Duluth, Bismarck, ND, and Fargo, ND, in January 2007. The next program is scheduled for January 12, 2007, at the Radisson University Hotel in Minneapolis. To register on-line go to: http://www.alamn.org/mn/prof/COPD_APrimaryCareUpdate.asp
For more information contact Glory Barduson at glory@alamn.org

BREATHING SPACE

For more information, or to request this material in another format contact: Janis Smith at 651-201-5909 or janis.smith@health.state.mn.us
MN Relay Service TDD: 1-800-627-3528

To receive this newsletter electronically, go to: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/Newsletter.html, and click on Subscribe to Breathing Space.

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

MDH Asthma Staff Contact Information:
Asthma Program Telephone Number: 651-201-5909
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