

Asthma education comes to you

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The National Asthma Council Australia is taking two of its most popular general practice education programs to GPs around the country

Asthma is a regular presentation for many general practitioners, but it can be hard to keep up with the latest management recommendations.

To help GPs stay up to date, the National Asthma Council Australia (NAC) conducts programs with divisions of general practice around Australia, bringing asthma education to rural, regional and metropolitan locations. The programs are free for attendees through funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

A-Team® asthma education

The NAC's A-Team® – a group of trained asthma experts – regularly presents asthma education workshops for GPs, practice nurses, asthma educators and other health professionals around Australia.

Established by the NAC in 2002, the A-Team Asthma Education Program aims to reinforce and increase levels of awareness in best practice asthma management. The current series of workshops focuses on the Asthma Cycle of Care (the former Asthma 3+ Visit Plan). Each session also covers two to three additional A-Team education modules chosen by the host division.

A team of one doctor (GP or respiratory physician) and one asthma educator usually presents each two hour workshop. The NAC provides all material to ensure attendees receive consistent, complete and up-to-date information, whether the workshop is in suburban Melbourne or remote Fitzroy Crossing.

Evaluation responses have been consistently positive since the A-Team program began. In feedback from the

38 workshops held last year, almost all respondents (97.1%) felt that attending the workshop had 'somewhat' or 'considerably' increased their knowledge of evidence based best practice in asthma management.

Each workshop is run as a single, standalone session, approved by the RACGP QA&CPD Program for four Category 2 points (two points per hour).

Spirometry training course

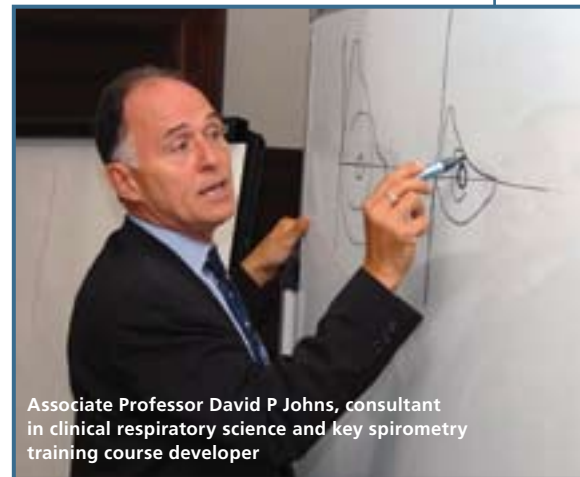
Spirometry is the lung function test of choice for diagnosing asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and for assessing asthma control.^{1,2} It is also an effective aid in encouraging patients to quit smoking.³ However, research commissioned by the NAC found that many GPs would welcome additional training in spirometry,⁴ with gaps identified in the delivery of consistent national spirometry education.

In response to these findings, the NAC recently launched Australia's first national spirometry training course for GPs and practice nurses.

The course is the result of extensive consultation and development involving the Australian and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science (ANZSRS) and the NAC's GP Asthma Group.

The six hour interactive course is designed to provide participants with comprehensive training in the application, measurement and interpretation of expiratory spirometry in general practice. Hands-on components allow participants to apply their new knowledge in a practical setting.

Following the model of the A-Team program, each workshop is usually



Associate Professor David P Johns, consultant in clinical respiratory science and key spirometry training course developer

delivered by a team of one GP and one respiratory scientist and is hosted by a local division of general practice. The workshop is the only ANZSRS-endorsed one day spirometry course for GPs, and has been approved as an active learning module by the RACGP QA&CPD Program for 40 Category 1 points.

For information about attending A-Team asthma education or spirometry workshops, and to access a range of asthma and spirometry resources, visit www.nationalasthma.org.au. ♦

1. National Asthma Council Australia. Asthma management handbook. Melbourne: NAC, 2006. Available at: www.nationalasthma.org.au/cms/index.php
2. McKenzie DK, Abramson M, Crockett AJ, et al. The COPD-X Plan: Australian and New Zealand guidelines for the management of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Brisbane: Australian Lung Foundation, 2007. Available at: www.copdx.org.au/guidelines/index.asp
3. Parkes G, Greenhalgh T, Griffin M, Dent R. Effect on smoking quit rate of telling patients their lung age: the Step2quit randomized controlled trial. *BMJ* 2008;336:598–600.
4. Johns DP, Burton D, Walters JA, Wood-Baker R. National survey of spirometer ownership and usage in general practice in Australia. *Respirology* 2006;11:292–8.