



National Asthma Council Australia

Annual Report 2007



The National Asthma Council Australia, a not-for-profit organisation, is a collaboration of:

- The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Asthma Foundations of Australia
- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy

Vision

A community that recognises the impact of asthma as a social, economic and health issue, whose members share responsibility for the elimination of asthma and minimising the risk of asthma.

Mission

The mission of the National Asthma Council Australia is to bring together all forms of endeavour in the field of asthma and associated conditions, in order to improve the quality of life and health outcomes of people with asthma and their carers.

Business

The National Asthma Council Australia is the lead agency for asthma and associated conditions. Its business is:

- Providing the latest information on asthma to health professionals directed at improving their quality of care
- Conducting and evaluating the delivery of national public awareness and education campaigns
- Being the national communicating authority on asthma
- Gathering, refining and disseminating information on asthma
- Taking on the role of a catalyst for change to facilitate improvement in the standards of asthma care and management.

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Chairman's Message



One of the highlights of the past year was the successful launch of the sixth edition of the *Asthma Management Handbook*, the culmination of the work of so many colleagues in Australia and New Zealand. We are extremely fortunate to have this national commitment

to get the asthma treatment guidelines right in terms of the evidence and practical usefulness. International interest in the *Asthma Management Handbook* is always keen and, as usual, we have distributed a number of copies around the world to respiratory organisations and to primary care and respiratory colleagues. Although each country needs its own guidelines that reflect local conditions, there is always much to learn from viewing other national guidelines.

The resources for health professionals produced by the National Asthma Council (NAC) make a significant contribution to the national education scene and are distributed to all GPs, pharmacists, asthma educators, allergists, respiratory, general and paediatric physicians, other relevant health professionals and Asthma Foundations. These are also available on our much visited website. We have now published a few resources on the website only, but, from our ongoing observation of the preferences of health professionals, hard copy resources are still more effective, backed up by web availability. We know this is going to change over time.

We have had a productive year for information papers, revising our earlier LTRA paper and producing a paper on *Allergic rhinitis and the patient with asthma* with an accompanying consumer brochure, reinforced by a satellite broadcast on the same topic. We also published *Patient-centred health care in primary care: an overview*, a web-only information paper that was an expression of the

NAC's interest in the common problems faced in chronic disease and the need for individual experts and chronic disease organisations to work together. As well as the information papers, we produced a third edition of one of our most popular resources, the Managing Your Asthma chart, which depicts all the devices and medications used in asthma.

The NAC has continued its discussions with Asthma Foundations of Australia to explore a closer working relationship and establish a memorandum of understanding, and begun some joint activities. Work with other stakeholders has continued as usual, including liaising with the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy on the asthma and rhinitis activities, with the Pharmacy Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society on a variety of issues, with the Australia and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Scientists on the development of a new 6-hour GP spirometry course as well as ongoing liaison with the Australian Lung Foundation.

Our Sensitive Choice program successfully completed its first year, bringing new and enthusiastic supporters and creating an innovative program for some longstanding partners. This program will eventually benefit a number of asthma projects, not just ours.

I would like to thank my fellow board members, and the many others who help us in our work, including our own dedicated staff.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Wilson." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Professor John Wilson
BSc(Hons), MBBS, PhD, FRACP, FCCP
Chairman

Chief Executive Officer's Message



One of the NAC's main tasks is to ensure implementation of the *Asthma Management Handbook* (AMH), the national treatment guidelines for asthma that are produced by the NAC and revised every few years. This has been a major effort since 1989, when the first guidelines were published.

Since then, the NAC has provided free educational opportunities to general practitioners (GPs) and other health professionals such as pharmacists, practice nurses and asthma educators. The focus has been on GPs as the largest and the main group for the treatment of asthma. A strategic approach has always been taken, aiming to fit training opportunities into the GP environment, such as workshops at major national GP meetings, or in the Divisional structure, and similarly in the pharmacy world. Of the latter, it should be said that the Pharmaceutical Society and the Pharmacy Guild, which are closely linked with the NAC, have done most of that themselves.

Most of the NAC's educational activities offer CME/CPD points from the RACGP, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, the Royal College of Nursing Australia and/or the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, and the NAC has been an accredited education provider for some years.

Findings from the adult learning literature have been embraced, and an interactive style of activity is preferred. Workshop numbers are usually kept low enough to enable this; however, the number of attendees cannot always be controlled and sometimes the popularity of an event will overwhelm this goal.

The NAC has conducted A-Team™ asthma education workshops for GPs and allied health professionals since 2002, with funding from the Australian Department of Health and Ageing. The workshops are held in Divisions of General Practice in each State and Territory with a focus on rural and remote Divisions. Often this is the only opportunity that remote Divisions have to get asthma workshops presented locally and it is much appreciated.

The current series of A-Team™ workshops focuses on the Asthma Cycle of Care (the former 3+ Visit Plan). Each session also covers 2–3 additional topics, chosen from the A-Team™ education modules, that the host Division has indicated are the most useful for and/or in demand by their audience.

In addition to publications and workshops, the NAC uses innovative strategies such as satellite broadcasts and webcasts with interactive components to reach as many health professionals as possible.

Over 5000 health professionals participated in NAC educational activities in 2006/07. The GPs, asthma educators and respiratory physicians who were our presenters must all be thanked. Our sponsors and the Australian Department of Health and Ageing have made these educational sessions possible and have our warmest appreciation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kristine Whorlow".

Kristine Whorlow
Chief Executive Officer

Special Features

Publication of *Asthma Management Handbook 2006*

On 14 November 2006, The Hon. Christopher Pyne, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, launched the sixth edition of the *Asthma Management Handbook* (AMH), the gold standard of practice for asthma management in Australia.

At the launch Prof. Justin Beilby, Chairman of the Guidelines Committee, spoke of the preparation for this edition of the AMH, which began with a national survey of GPs, the main user group, to ascertain their views on content, layout and format. Then, the hard work of more than 60 expert volunteers, including GPs, pharmacists, asthma educators, allergists, respiratory physicians and scientists, began in earnest with the first meeting of the multi-disciplinary Guidelines Committee in January 2004.

Subject working groups were formed, each with two GPs to maintain focus on primary care and practicality. A modified SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network) process was used. All chapters were peer reviewed and the final draft was circulated to asthma stakeholder groups. Edits were made up to the eleventh hour to ensure the AMH was as current as possible. The resulting publication was formally endorsed by the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

Professor John Wilson, Chairman of the NAC, reminded everyone that Australia had the first national asthma treatment guidelines in the world when they were launched in 1989.

Since then, the mortality rate has decreased significantly, as have emergency department attendances, intensive care admissions and hospital bed days directly related to asthma, reflecting the intense and ongoing effort of the NAC to implement the asthma guidelines through a variety of asthma educational activities. Government, individuals, industry and professional societies have all played an important role in contributing to, and reviewing, the content. So much support, involvement and collaboration results in a strong sense of national ownership of the AMH, which is a major contributing factor to the success of its implementation and will continue to be so.

Eighty thousand copies of the AMH were printed for distribution to all GPs, pharmacists, asthma educators, allergists, respiratory, general, emergency and paediatric physicians, respiratory scientists, Asthma Foundations and medical and pharmacy students. As usual, the new AMH was uploaded in full onto the NAC's much visited website where it continues to be one of the most visited sections.

Funding for the production, printing and distribution of the AMH was provided by a number of generous and committed sponsors including the Australian Department of Health and Ageing. The NAC is grateful for the support of these organisations and for the assistance of all those involved in the development of the AMH.



Some of the key contributors to the *Asthma Management Handbook 2006*. From left: Dr Chris Brown, Assoc. Prof. David P. Johns, Prof. Nicholas Glasgow, Prof. Peter Van Asperen, Prof. Colin Robertson, Dr Sandra Anderson, Prof. John Wilson, Mr Marcus Weidinger, Ms Cassie Slader, Prof. Justin Beilby, and Dr Kerry Hancock.



The Hon. Christopher Pyne, then Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for Health and Ageing, officially launching the *Asthma Management Handbook 2006*.

Farewell to Kathy Hope



The departure of Kathy Hope, our Project Manager, in December left us both hopeless and hapless. After the effect of the riotous farewell attended by many interstate GPAGers and the PAG Chairman had died down, we had to face a new era for the NAC. We still had the panic of getting the copy ready for *GP Review* and many other publications, but Kathy had left this particular fun behind.

With Kathy at the helm, we had somehow battled together through many Asthma Management Handbooks with the 2006 one being an epic production. She bore the brunt of this, co-ordinating the team of over 60 writers and reviewers, and liaising with our medical writers. Led by Kathy, we worked in morning and evening shifts to reach the final deadline, which somehow we did.

We sent Kathy on a few international adventures of which there were many tales to tell. The favourite one was her arrival in Amsterdam for the International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG) First World Conference to discover that the pre-paid hotel bookings for the Australian GPs had all been cancelled because they were late checking in. Not a thought had been given to the inevitable plane delays. Kathy shed her usual cheery persona and became a grim faced and shrieking harriidan with severe jetlag, until the matter was resolved, and the hotel had provided solace for her and the Aussie GPs in the bar.

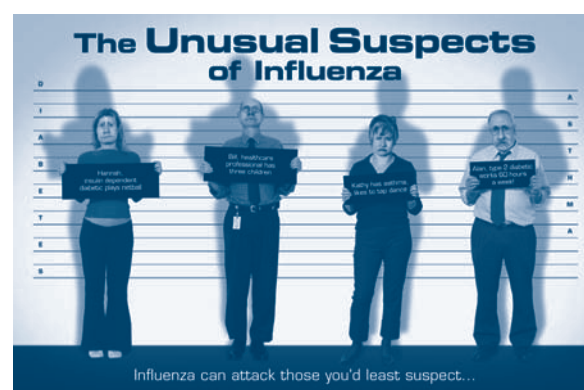
With the help of the indomitable Garry Irving, Kathy bravely took on the organization of the IPCRG Second World Conference in Melbourne, an over-

whelming task but one with a very successful result. There were many alarms and excursions, not the least being the SARS outbreak and our fear that the northern hemisphere and Asia-Pacific delegates would avoid travel. Luckily they didn't.

Kathy brought many skills to the NAC, with her clinical background as a former nurse and as an adult fiction editor. We enjoyed all sorts of tussles over grammar and syntax with Kathy as the inevitable informed winner. The *Ridiculous Person's Little Book of Words* had to be banned from the office as the Project Manager and the CEO were constantly distracted by its presence.

A special extra skill that Kathy brought to the NAC was her own experience of asthma. She starred in videos and all sorts of media as the informed patient. One of the most amusing was as the asthma patient with influenza, where she and the other spokespeople were made over to look as if they had the flu, and then exhibited in the national media.

In a small organisation with a large output, Kathy was a tireless hard worker. We were sad to see her go but delighted she had found such an interesting new job at Wellmark.



Spotlight on Dr Richard Gutch



**Dr Richard Gutch OAM
MB BS (Melb), FRACGP**

Richard (Dick) Gutch was one of the founders of the National Asthma Council (Campaign as it then was), the group of experts and asthma stakeholder representatives who came together in the late 1980s to discuss how to fix the escalating problem of asthma in Australia. Dick was involved as the representative of the Royal Australian College of GPs

(RACGP) and brought to the NAC his marvellous mix of business and primary care expertise, along with his entrepreneurial skills. Dick was involved with the NAC from 1988 to 1995, becoming a director in 1990 when incorporation occurred. He played quite a role in the correcting of the innumerable drafts of the first Constitution and was meticulous in ensuring that the NAC had the correct insurance cover. He was also a very concerned GP representative, always looking after GP and College interests.

Dick has had a highly significant role in the RACGP at Victorian and national levels, having held many important offices, including Chairman of Council, Provost, Chairman of Trustees, Chairman of the

Special Features

RACGP Superannuation Plan Pty Ltd and, in his capacity as Chairman of the Property Development Committee, purchased the Palmerston Crescent, South Melbourne building that is now the headquarters of the College and the NAC. He has also served on the Board of The Victorian Academy for General Practice. He is a Life Fellow of the RACGP and in 2006 was awarded the OAM for his services to medicine.

During his time with the NAC he served in a number of capacities, including as Chairman of the Finance Committee and as an advisor to the CEO, understanding that Directors are often needed to provide advice and counsel to the CEO of a small organisation. His advice was invaluable as the NAC steadily

worked its way through establishment to consolidation and became a national presence in health. Although he retired from the NAC in 1995, he has continued to be a source of advice and contacts.

Anyone who gets to know Dick learns how multi-skilled he is, not only a talented pianist with a penchant for car racing but a man of considerable interests. Whilst a partner for over thirty years of the Clifton Hill Medical Group, he also had alternate careers as a cattle breeder and property developer. In retirement he has become a successful vigneron, and his winery has just been completed.

Much of the NAC's success has been due to the dedication of Dick and the other committed founders.

NAC Website Summary

The NAC celebrated a decade online during 2006/07 with annual visitors approaching 600,000 and pages viewed exceeding 1.4 million (Table 1). The sixth edition of the *Asthma Management Handbook* was launched online in November coinciding with the print release. The online version of the Handbook carries the full list of evidence-based references and continues to be the leading destination for our web visitors.

The international accreditation for the NAC website from Health on the Net Foundation (HONcode) was renewed in October 2006. The HONcode is the oldest and most used code for ethical and trustworthy medical and health related information available on Internet.

Nationally, the NAC has a continuing partnership with Health/Insite, the Australian Government online health initiative providing access to quality information about human health. The current links from Health/Insite to the NAC website allow access to over 500 web pages of information about asthma and asthma management.

In Victoria, the NAC is a Better Health Channel website content partner helping to produce reliable consumer health information for the busy Victorian State Government site.

Strong NAC website visitor growth continued throughout 2006/07 with monthly visitors of more than 50,000, showing an overall increase of 14.5% over the previous year. The growth in pages viewed was an impressive 25% finishing just below

Table 1

Page views for top areas	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
<i>Asthma Management Handbook – all pages</i>	183,728	211,156	202,833	240,788	220,395
<i>Spirometry – all pages</i>	114,616	169,777	179,501	120,883	132,915
<i>Asthma Information Papers and Brochures Series</i>			16,453	116,643	144,333
<i>Asthma information pages</i>	32,462	43,016	38,434	49,999	69,460
<i>Spirometry Users' and Buyers' Guide pages</i>			8,576	44,512	35,061
<i>Other publications</i>	25,614	34,972	39,820	43,784	82,821
<i>NAC home page</i>	52,895	57,649	52,095	64,634	99,716
<i>Newsletter pages</i>	16,564	25,120	32,873	42,116	49,179
<i>Total all pages viewed</i>	756,860	802,679	875,929	1,147,118	1,433,726
<i>Total visitors</i>	284,645	359,028	347,753	518,165	593,509

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1.5 million for the year and averaging over 147,000 monthly for the final quarter of 2006/07. Information on spirometry and the extensive range of NAC online publications were the main focus of the page view increase.

It is the NAC flagship, the *Asthma Management Handbook 2006*, however, that remains the top destination with 220,395 page views, representing around 15% of the all pages viewed. The spirometry resources, including *Spirometry Users' and Buyers' Guide* and *Spirometry: the Measurement and Interpretation of Ventilatory Function in Clinical Practice* contributed 9% of page views. The *Asthma Information Papers and Brochures Series* represents 10% of all page views, an increase of 24% over the previous year. General asthma information pages have shown a 40% increase and now contribute 69,460 pages.

The value of our monthly *Newsletter* is again clearly demonstrated with that section of the website receiving almost 50,000 page views. There are now more than 2500 subscribers to the email version.

The NAC strives to communicate evidence-based asthma information online with clarity and purpose. And while the NAC website is a work-in-progress, as are all good websites, feedback for our online effort during 2006/07 is most encouraging.

Looking forward, the NAC website will utilise evolving web technologies to continue providing excellent asthma management information resources.

Feedback

The current AMH is very well presented – as indeed is the whole site.

Member, HealthInsite Editorial Team

The National Asthma Council website is superb. Its design and layout optimises accessibility to information and is a pleasure to read. Thank you for providing this excellent resource.

QLD Pharmacist

Figure 1 Annual visitors

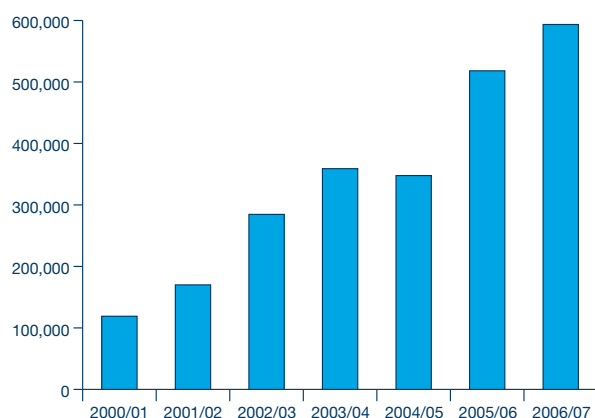
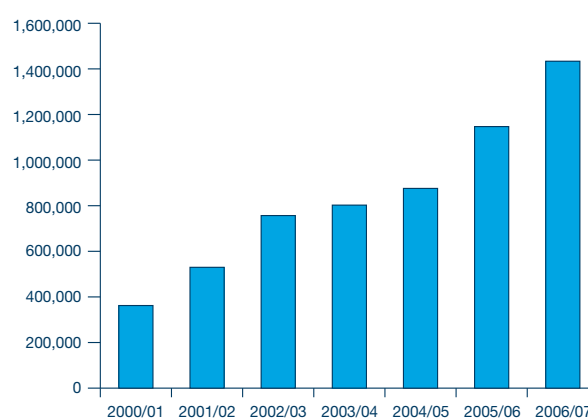


Figure 2 Annual pages viewed



Sensitive Choice Program Report



The Sensitive Choice program, launched in April 2006, helps people with asthma and allergy to

identify companies that are committed to reducing asthma and allergy triggers.

The NAC receives many enquiries from people with asthma and their families wanting to know how to reduce asthma symptoms.

With over 12% of the population having asthma and 40% of the population having allergy, there is a large demand for guidance about making better lifestyle choices to help manage asthma and allergies more effectively.

The Sensitive Choice butterfly logo has been launched in response to this growing demand from Australians for help in managing their asthma and allergies.

Special Features

Why make a “Sensitive Choice”?

- Australians should be aware of the need to manage their asthma and the potential for reducing triggers.
- Manufacturers and suppliers are encouraged to produce products and services that may benefit people with asthma and their families and friends.
- The butterfly logo helps people make informed lifestyle choices that may help improve healthy outcomes for asthma and allergies.

Why a butterfly?

The NAC developed and tested a symbol that people instantly recognise as being “better for the environment” and a “better choice for allergy and asthma”. Of all the symbols associated with asthma and allergies, the simple butterfly offered the best response from consumers for the following reasons:

- the wings are symbolic of the lungs
- it is a gentle and sensitive creature
- it flies best in fresh air.

Product review process

The NAC considers products for acceptance into the program via a formal review process, which includes assessment by the Sensitive Choice Product Advisory Panel. Members of the Product Advisory Panel include experts in asthma, allergy, pharmacy, industrial chemistry and respiratory science. Other specialists are consulted where necessary.

Rapid Success in Year 1

More than 30 products were accepted into the Sensitive Choice program in its first year, including some well-known brands:

- Aaxis Pacific: SleepComfort Guardtech Anti Allergy Mattress and Pillow protectors
- AerisGuard: Air-conditioning treatment
- Ansell Healthcare: Powder free surgical and examination gloves
- Barloworld Coatings: Taubmans Easycoat Paint range with Microban
- Bradford Insulation: Bradford Gold Insulation and Bradford Soundscreen
- Daikin: Daikin Split System Air Conditioners and Air Purifier
- Dunlop Flooring
- Dunlop Foams
- Dyson: HEPA and non-HEPA residential vacuum cleaners

- Ego Pharmaceuticals: Body and face products for sensitive skin
- GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare: Panadol pain relief
- Hamilton Laboratories: Narium Natural Mist and Aquae Mouth Spray
- Hunt Heating: Hydronic home heating
- Jaspa Herington: Foam, down and feather pillow quilts and underlays treated with HealthGuard and Ultrafresh
- LG Electronics: LG Steam combined washer and dryer
- MiniJumbuk: Woollen quilts, pillows and underlay treated with Ultrafresh
- Pool and Spa Poppits
- Tasman Insulation (New Zealand)
- Tennant: Industrial vacuum cleaners
- Tontine: Polyester quilts and pillows treated with HealthGuard
- Warwick Fabrics

The program was also launched in New Zealand through a partnership with the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of New Zealand.

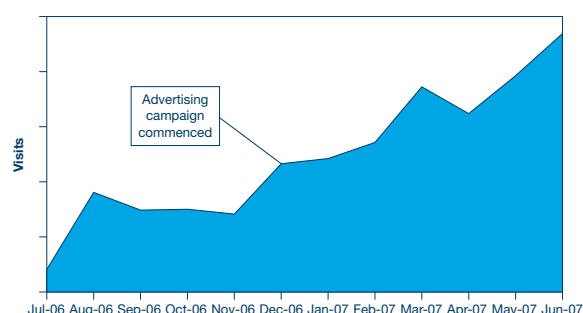
Promotion

The Sensitive Choice program is advertised to the public largely through magazines and newspapers, supported by a public relations campaign. Promotional activities highlight the program, butterfly logo and website, and deliver messages on asthma management where possible.

In a recent public poll, 9% of Australians said that they have seen the blue butterfly on packaging and in advertising. This is a strong indication of the value of the program and the growing interest in it.

Funding from the Sensitive Choice program is used for the important work of the NAC, which is dedicated to improving health outcomes for people with asthma and allergies.

Figure 1 Sensitive Choice website traffic growth



Activity Highlights

GP and Allied Health Professional Asthma Education Program

Part of the Australian Government's Asthma Management Program, the General Practitioner and Allied Health Professional Asthma Education Program (GPAHPAEP) aims to improve the health outcomes for all Australians with asthma. Representatives of key stakeholders form the Steering Committee that oversees the program, providing strategic direction, national quality standards, and a national evaluation and quality improvement strategy.

With funding from the Department of Health and Ageing for 2006–2009, the NAC is conducting three main activities under GPAHPAEP: the ongoing A-Team™ Asthma Education Program, a new national spirometry training course and a series of satellite broadcast programs.

A-Team™ Asthma Education Program

New asthma education workshops for general practitioners (GPs) and allied health professionals have been developed for the 2006–2009 cycle of the NAC's A-Team™ Asthma Education Program. The Program involves the training and support of expert asthma presenters (the A-Team) to deliver up-to-date education workshops with Divisions of General Practice and their State Based Organisations across Australia.

The content of the new workshop series focuses on the Asthma Cycle of Care. Each workshop session also covers 2–3 extra asthma topics chosen by the host Division of General Practice from the A-Team education modules.

Following extensive development, roll out of the new program around Australia began in 2007, with one of the first workshops held in Kununurra, WA, in collaboration with the Kimberley Division of General Practice and the local Aboriginal Medical Services. Workshops were also held in Adelaide, Townsville and Perth in June 2007. At the time of this report there are another 40 workshops scheduled for 2007/08.

With invaluable support from the dedicated health professionals who comprise the A-Team, the NAC anticipates it will comfortably exceed its contractual commitment of 66 workshops held over the 3-year period with more than 50% in rural or remote areas.

National Spirometry Training Course for GPs

A national survey conducted in 2004 found a low rate of spirometry usage by GPs, despite a high degree of awareness of the usefulness of lung function testing. In response, the NAC initiated the development of a national spirometry training course, taking into account the barriers identified by the GPs including accessibility and cost.

The resultant National Spirometry Training Course for GPs is the product of an extensive consultation and development process, culminating in endorsement by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science (ANZSRS) and the NAC. Respiratory scientists and members of the NAC's GP Asthma Group worked hard to develop this course.

Run as a 6-hour interactive program, the course is designed to provide participants with comprehensive training in the application, measurement and interpretation of expiratory spirometry in general practice. It is designed to build upon GPs' existing medical knowledge, including understanding of lung diseases and anatomy, and familiarity with spirometry.

Roll out of the course will commence later in 2007, administered by the NAC.

Satellite broadcast program on asthma and allergic rhinitis

In March 2007, the NAC presented a satellite broadcast program on asthma and allergic rhinitis via the Rural Health Education Foundation (RHEF). The program was developed following the NAC's asthma and allergic rhinitis expert summit held in May 2006.

In addition to presenting evidence for the clinical interrelationship between the conditions, the program discussed diagnosis and appropriate treatment of allergic rhinitis in people with asthma. The key message was that effective management of concurrent asthma and allergic rhinitis requires a combined approach.

Dr Norman Swan, ABC Radio National health reporter, chaired the interactive program, which included the panel answering live questions faxed or phoned in by viewers. The presenters were:

- Associate Professor Ian Charlton, GP
- Mr Peter Holder, community pharmacist

Activity Highlights

- Associate Professor Connie Katelaris, allergist and immunologist
- Associate Professor Frank Thien, adult respiratory and allergy physician

The RHEF reported that the outcome of the program was excellent. Viewer evaluations showed that both the level of interest and the quality of the program were extremely high. The RHEF anticipates that more than 4600 health professionals will view the program in total, with post-broadcast viewers accessing the recorded program via the RHEF website.

Asthma care models

The aim of the Asthma Care Models project is to improve the health outcomes for all Australians with asthma, and specifically to improve asthma management for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people living in rural and remote regions, older Australians and children.

A review of current literature was conducted to identify care models within the primary care context that could support the delivery of improved asthma management for all Australians. The review considered the literature relating to frameworks for chronic disease care (generic and asthma-specific) and approaches to the organisation of asthma care services in primary care for general populations and for the identified special-needs populations.

A steering committee consisting of representatives from primary care, consumers and priority groups provided input and guidance through discussion documents and teleconferences. Interviews were also conducted with health professionals involved in asthma care delivery.

The literature review and consultation process did not clearly identify defined care models that could be articulated and implemented within the Australian primary care setting for the priority groups. However, the findings highlighted the need for care models to be sufficiently flexible to allow tailoring to the needs of the target population and the resources of the organisations delivering asthma care. This project was nearing completion at the time of writing.

Publications

Asthma Management Handbook

The latest edition of Australia's national asthma treatment guidelines, the *Asthma Management Handbook 2006*, was published in November 2006.

See the Special Feature elsewhere in this report for details.

Asthma and allergic rhinitis publications

Two publications on asthma and allergic rhinitis were produced by the NAC with the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy as outcomes of an expert summit held by the NAC in May 2006. The summit and publications were supported by an educational grant from Schering-Plough.

The publications, *Allergic rhinitis and the patient with asthma*, a guide for health professionals, and *Allergic rhinitis and your asthma*, a consumer brochure, were developed to highlight the strong link between the conditions. The key message was that effective treatment of allergic rhinitis improves asthma control and lung function.

Assoc. Prof. Mimi Tang, paediatric allergist and immunologist, led an expert group of allergists, respiratory physicians, ENT specialists, GPs and pharmacists in developing the publications. Ms Jenni Harman, medical writer, assisted the group.

The two publications were published on the NAC website and in hardcopy in February 2007, supported by a public relations campaign with the relevant medical and pharmacy media. More than 30,000 copies of the health professional guide and 65,000 copies of the consumer brochure were printed and distributed to GPs, allergists, respiratory physicians, asthma educators and pharmacists.

Patient-centred health care discussion paper

Practical ways to incorporate the principles of patient-centred health care into every day practice were the focus of a discussion paper published by the NAC in June 2007. The paper, *Patient-centred health care in primary care: an overview*, highlights the principles of patient-centred health care and provides practical examples of how primary care professionals can make a difference by enhancing their patient-centred focus.

Stemming from a cross-sector workshop convened by the NAC in November 2005, which explored how the health system might be adapted to better suit the needs of patients, the paper has relevance to all primary health care patients and is not restricted to asthma.

Workshop participants Ms Diana Aspinall, population health consultant, Ms Helen Cameron-Tucker, physiotherapist, Mr Peter Holder, community pharmacist, Dr Judy Proudfoot, GP, Dr Ron Tomlins, GP, and the late Dr Peter Waxman, GP, helped develop the paper with assistance from Ms Jenni

Harman, medical writer. Other contributors were Ms Karen Carey-Hazell, consumer representative, and Ms Milena Katz, dietician.

The discussion paper was funded by an independent educational grant from Pfizer Australia. Both the paper and the report of proceedings from the original Patient-Centred Health Care Workshop are web-only resources available on the NAC website.

Leukotriene receptor antagonists information paper

A comprehensive revision of the 2003 information paper on leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs) in the treatment of children with asthma was conducted in 2006/07, supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia).

The review group consisted of Prof. Peter van Asperen, Prof. Craig Mellis and Prof. Colin Robertson, paediatric respiratory physicians, Dr Kerry Hancock, GP, and Ms Toni Riley, community pharmacist, assisted by Ms Jenni Harman, medical writer. Other contributors were Dr Sandy Anderson, respiratory scientist, and Assoc. Prof. Mimi Tang, paediatric allergist and immunologist.

The updated LTRA paper will be published on the NAC website and in hardcopy in July 2007, supported by a public relations campaign with the relevant medical and general media. More than 30,000 copies will be printed and distributed to GPs, allergists, respiratory physicians, asthma educators and pharmacists.

Managing Your Asthma wall chart

In February 2007, the NAC released an updated version of the popular *Managing Your Asthma* wall chart, which is designed to help health professionals discuss asthma medications with patients.

The new A2-size wall chart features up-to-date colour photographs of 43 different asthma medications available in Australia. Products are shown next to their current packaging and are grouped according to classification as relievers, non-steroidal preventers, corticosteroid preventers, symptom controllers and combination medications, as well as inhalers used in COPD.

The original version of the chart was produced by the Townsville Division of General Practice, which has collaborated with the NAC on the subsequent versions. In 2005 and again in 2006, an unrestricted educational grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia) has enabled the NAC to update, print and distribute the chart to health professionals at no cost.

A public relations campaign was conducted with the relevant medical and pharmacy media to announce the arrival of the revised chart. *Managing Your Asthma* has since become one of the NAC's most requested resources and, following comprehensive distribution of the first two versions, the initial distribution of this third version of 10,000 copies was exhausted within 4 months, necessitating the printing of a further 5,000 copies. It has consistently been one of the top pages accessed on the NAC website.

Written asthma action plans library

A comprehensive online library of downloadable written asthma action plans was launched on the NAC website in June 2007. The new library provides quick access to a selection of the most reputable plans currently available in Australia, as well as links to several international options. All plans can be accessed directly from the website, enabling health professionals to select the most appropriate plan for their patients and eliminating the need to stockpile hard copies.

The new area features the existing action plan templates from the NAC and Department of Health and Ageing, plus the SMART action plans designed specifically for patients using Symbicort and an action plan for remote Indigenous Australians with asthma.

Written asthma action plans are an integral part of asthma management and are one of the most effective asthma interventions available, as highlighted in the introduction to the library. The new website area was developed to increase their use in Australia.

Asthma research awards

The NAC funds annual awards to encourage research into asthma. Offered via the NAC's individual member bodies, the awards focus on asthma research presented at each organisation's annual/biennial scientific meeting or conference.

The winner of the 2006 Asthma Foundations Australia (AFA) and NAC Asthma Research Award was Ms Kelly Andrews from the University of Wollongong, NSW, for her presentation 'Asthma awareness and education in the 65+ age group'.

The winner of the 2007 Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) and NAC Asthma Prize was Associate Professor Stuart Hirst from the MRC & Asthma UK Centre in Allergic Mechanisms of Asthma, London, for his presentation 'Requirement of vascular endothelial growth factor for induction of pro-angiogenic changes by asthmatic human airway smooth muscle'.

Activity Highlights

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and NAC Asthma Research Award and the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) and NAC Asthma Research Award were not presented in 2006/07.

Asia-Pacific activities

The NAC's role in the Asia-Pacific region has continued this year, with the CEO, Ms Kristine Whorlow, working with a number of countries as they develop initiatives for asthma and respiratory disease.

Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Lung Foundation was officially launched in Dhaka in February 2007, at the First National Conference of the Bangladesh Lung Foundation, attended by the CEO. A Primary Care Respiratory Group has been formed and will come under the auspices of the Lung Foundation.

Club Excel, the patient club, was also launched in February with the CEO speaking as the guest of honour along with presenters Dr Kazi Bennoor, respiratory specialist, and Mr Mumtaz Uddin Ahmed, renowned dramatist and playwright.

China

In August 2006, the CEO addressed the China Asthma Alliance at its annual scientific meeting in Changsha, on the 'Development and implementation of asthma treatment guidelines'. There was considerable interest in the fact that Australia has had national guidelines since 1989 and was finalising the sixth edition at that time.

Korea

Dr Yoon-Seok Chang and Dr Chang-Han Park of the Korea Asthma and Allergy Foundation (KAAF) visited the NAC in January 2007, and were given an overview of many aspects of asthma and allergy work in Australia. Their trip included visits to Dr Chris Hogan's general practice, to The Alfred to meet Prof. John Wilson, Prof. Robyn O'Hehir, Assoc. Prof. Jo Douglass and Mr Bruce Thompson, and to the Asthma Foundation of Victoria.

Malaysia

The CEO continued to work with the well-established Asthma Council Malaysia, attending quarterly meetings as an advisor, and, in particular, assisting with sustainability issues.

Sri Lanka

The National Asthma Council Sri Lanka is continuing to develop, and a Primary Care Respiratory Group linked to the Council has been formed. The CEO



Launch of Club Excel, Bangladesh, February 2007. From left: Mr Shakib Lohani, Dr Kazi Bennoor, Mr Mumtaz Uddin Ahmed, and Ms Kristine Whorlow.

was invited to address this group on one of her visits there.

Taiwan

The Taiwan Asthma Council was officially launched in July 2006 in Taipei, attended by the CEO who had been working to help form the Asthma Council for some time.

Asian Asthma Patient Coalition

After a period of development, consultation and gathering of patient representatives from many Asia-Pacific countries, the first ever pan-Asian patient network, the Asian Asthma Patient Coalition, was launched in January 2007 in Kuala Lumpur with the CEO as convenor.

People with asthma and media from 10 countries attended, and an enormous amount of media attention was generated across the region about the perspective of people with asthma. These patient representatives, who are from a variety of occupations, are now acting as advocates in their own countries.

Professor Richard Beasley of New Zealand and Dr Datin Aziah Binte Ahmad Mahayiddin of Malaysia spoke on the medical perspective.



Asian Asthma Patient Coalition launch media coverage in *The Sun*, Hong Kong, January 2007. Pictured are two Asian celebrities with asthma who helped launch the Coalition, Taiwanese actress Jacqueline Lee and Korean wrestler Lee Wang-Pyo.

National Asthma Council Supporters



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