Chapters share success stories with asthma quality improvement initiative
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Naresh Purohit, M.D., FAAP, thought he was providing good asthma care to the children in his Alabama practice, but he wanted to be sure. So he got involved in the AAP Chapter Quality Network’s (CQN’s) asthma quality improvement initiative.

“I knew health care was moving in that direction,” Dr. Purohit said, “and so our practice wanted to make sure to see improved outcomes for our children, standardize care and reduce hospitalizations.”

Now five months into the initiative, Dr. Purohit reports that his practice’s processes for patients are more streamlined; they are spending more time evaluating patients, and they are starting to see more new patients in the practice.

“Families are saying, ‘Look, this clinic is spending a lot more time on this. We need to go to them,’” Dr. Purohit said. “Word is getting around. They feel like they are getting higher quality care and proper treatment.”

The CQN Asthma Project works at the practice, chapter and national levels to improve quality of care and outcomes for children with asthma. CQN projects are rooted in quality improvement methodology with a focus on guideline-based implementation. Clinicians, practices and chapters set improvement goals, assess barriers, test new interventions and processes, work toward embedding changes into their workflow, and ultimately improve care for children.

In the CQN pilot asthma project, funded by the Merck Childhood Asthma Network, 18,606 patient encounters were analyzed by teams of participating clinicians. In the second phase, 45 practices are furthering this work, with an emphasis on reaching all of their patients with asthma by implementing a registry, using billing queries to identify patients and engaging parents. Chapters and a physician hospital organization are taking leadership roles, including coaching and mentoring practices; leading monthly calls; and shaping the overall design of the initiative.

“CQN activity has made the chapter a major force in the state for pediatric asthma initiatives,” said Ohio physician leader P. Cooper White, M.D., FAAP, who also implements the improvement work in his own practice. “The methods bring about a striking change in approach for most participating practices, with big improvements in process measures.”

Dr. White counts lower rates of emergency department (ED) use by his patients and the development of databases and registries in his hospital system among the many benefits of the project.

Andrew “Wes” Stubblefield, M.D. FAAP, CQN physician project leader for the Alabama Chapter, said health care professionals have found great value in the standardization of the asthmatic patient encounter and education on implementation of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute guidelines.

“While providing this enhanced level of care for asthma, the results have been genuinely exciting,” Dr. Stubblefield said. “Improvements in medication management, for example, have directly impacted our emergency department use.”
to our asthmatic patients has presented challenges in time management,” Dr. Stubblefield said, “we are working together to invent novel strategies to improve efficiency without sacrificing quality.”

During phase two, the Alabama Chapter also has been working with the Center for Strategic Health Innovation at the University of South Alabama to develop a practical, web-based asthma disease registry that will be offered to participating practices. This tool will help the chapter and clinicians sustain quality improvement work within the state for asthma and potentially other chronic conditions.

While he waits for the registry tool to become available, Dr. Purohit continues to see success stories in his practice. He recounted his experience with a mother who reported that her two children were going to the ED eight to 10 times per year. An asthma action plan was developed for each child, but the mother was not convinced, and they were back in a month. “At her third visit, she just got it,” Dr. Purohit said. “She said, ‘This is the best thing you could have done for my children and for me. We don’t go to the ER anymore.’”

“I think we are making a big impact,” Dr. Purohit concluded. “Parents are feeling more confident managing their child’s asthma at home. They feel like they can make informed decisions and don’t need to run to the ER anymore. This is awesome.”

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AAP receives grant to improve asthma care for children

The Academy has received a $1.38 million grant from The JPB Foundation to fund the Accelerating Improved Care for Children with Asthma Program. The program will build on the work of the AAP Comprehensive Asthma Program, which includes the AAP Chapter Quality Network Asthma Project and the Medical Home Chapter Champions Program on Asthma.

With this new support, the Academy will work with four chapters to improve care for all of their asthma patients by engaging practices in adopting the asthma guidelines from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute/National Asthma Education and Prevention Program.

Selected practices will test a registry tool to assist in clinically managing asthma patients. One chapter also will test a home-visiting model based on the Children’s Asthma Initiative of Children’s Hospital Boston, in which community health workers visit children’s homes to assess asthma triggers and teach families self-management skills (http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/02/15/peds.2010-3472).

A network of AAP chapter champions on medical home and asthma will disseminate best practices at the state level.

The Academy will partner with payers such as UnitedHealthcare to capture data on patients’ emergency department use and hospitalizations.

“This generous gift from The JPB Foundation will accelerate our collaborative work with AAP chapters to improve asthma care and outcomes for children. We are delighted to have this opportunity,” said AAP President Robert W. Block, M.D., FAAP. “There’s nothing more important than assuring that children receive the right care at the right time in a medical home.”

For more information on the Chapter Alliance for Quality Improvement or the Chapter Quality Network Asthma Project, contact Jessica Zar, in the AAP Department of Community, Chapter and State Affairs, at 800-433-9016, ext. 4739, or e-mail jzar@aap.org.
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