



## ACAAI KEY AND SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- Allergies and asthma are serious diseases and that's "nothing to sneeze at." Misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment can be dangerous.
- Anyone with allergies and asthma should be able to feel good, be active all day and sleep well at night. No one should accept less.
- Board-certified allergists are the best-trained health professionals to perform allergy testing and treat allergic diseases effectively. Allergists:
  - Treat more than just symptoms.
  - Can identify the source of your suffering and develop a treatment plan to eliminate symptoms.
  - Provide you with the most cost-effective care and best outcomes.
- Visit [AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org](http://AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org) for more information and tools to use.

### Supporting Messages:

#### Patient survey on allergist care:

- Most allergy sufferers say allergists are more effective at relieving their symptoms. Of the sufferers, 54 percent thought their allergist recommended a treatment plan that was more effective than any other non-allergist or over-the-counter medication
- Fully 46 percent more patients felt their treatment was very effective when seeing an allergist compared to a non-allergist.
- An allergist is successful in treating up to 90 percent of patients with seasonal allergies and 70 to 80 percent with perennial allergies.
- Sufferers say allergists are the most qualified to treat most allergies, and that allergists are more effective at relieving symptoms. Well over half say allergists' treatment is very effective, while only 4 in 10 say the same of treatment by a non-allergist.

#### Disease prevalence and importance of allergist care:

- An estimated 40 million to 50 million Americans have an allergic condition. These include asthma, hay fever, sinus infections, eye allergies, reactions to food, insect stings and drugs, or skin allergies, such as eczema and hives.

- Although symptoms may not always be severe, allergies and asthma are serious and, in some cases, deadly. The conditions, however, can be effectively controlled with proper diagnosis and treatment that involves more than just relieving symptoms but finding the source of the suffering.
- Allergists are experts in diagnosing and treating allergic diseases with an evaluation that includes a medical history, physical exam and administration of appropriate tests including allergy tests and breathing tests. After diagnosis, allergists teach patients the best way to avoid exposure to potential allergy triggers and select the most effective treatments to allow them to lead a normal, healthy life.
- Allergists also are specialists in administering allergy shots, or immunotherapy, which can actually alter the progression of allergic disease, curing patients of symptoms and preventing asthma and the development of other allergies.
- Patients who do not see an allergist may risk having test results misinterpreted which can lead to over-diagnosis and inappropriate management that can be harmful. It also may lead to over-prescription of medication and treatments, and costly and unnecessary allergen avoidance measures, including exclusion diets that may cause nutritional deficiency. For patients with asthma, misdiagnosis and mismanagement may lead to under-treatment which can be fatal.<sup>1</sup>

#### Cost effectiveness and treatment outcomes for asthma:

- Research shows that asthma patients under the care of an allergist have better outcomes at less cost because of fewer emergency care visits, fewer hospitalizations, reduced lengths of hospital stays, fewer days missed from work or school, increased productivity in their work and personal lives, greater satisfaction with their care and an improved quality of life.
  - The estimated economic cost of asthma is \$20.7 billion annually with direct medical costs at \$15.6 billion and indirect costs totaling \$5.1 billion annually.<sup>2</sup>
  - Improved outcomes with asthma specialists include:
    - 54 percent to 76 percent reduction in emergency room visits<sup>3,4</sup>
    - 60 percent to 89 percent reduction in hospitalizations<sup>4,5</sup>
    - 77 percent reduction in lost time from work or school<sup>5</sup>
  - These improved outcomes reduce asthma treatment costs with a 77 percent reduction in emergency room costs and 95 percent reduction in inpatient care costs.<sup>4,6</sup>

#### Immunotherapy cost savings

- Studies also show that patients with allergies who receive allergy shots can significantly reduce their health care costs.
  - The estimated economic cost of allergic rhinitis is \$11.2 billion with doctor visits accounting for approximately one-third of those costs (36 percent) and prescription medications accounting for the majority of the remaining costs (59 percent). Over-the-counter medications are not included in these projections but are estimated to be equivalent to the amount spent on prescription medications.<sup>7,8</sup>

- While medications can only provide symptom relief, immunotherapy can modify and prevent disease progression
- The therapy results in health care cost savings of 33 percent to 41 percent according to initial U.S. research.<sup>9,10</sup> Other longer-term studies in Europe report a savings as much as 80 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Government guidelines for referral:

National government guidelines recognize the importance of specialist care for asthma and recommend patients see an allergist if they:

- Have asthma symptoms every day and often at night that limit activity
- Have had a life-threatening asthma attack
- Do not meet asthma treatment goals after three to six months or don't respond to treatment
- Have unusual or hard to diagnose symptoms
- Have other conditions such as severe hay fever or sinusitis that complicate asthma or make it hard to diagnose
- Need more tests to find out what causes symptoms
- Need more instruction on a treatment plan, medicines or asthma triggers
- Might be helped by allergy shots
- Need treatment with a medicine called oral corticosteroids or have used this medicine more than twice in one year
- Have stayed in the hospital because of asthma
- Need help to identify asthma triggers
- Have questions about an asthma diagnosis

Additional messages for use with professional audience:

- Only 7 percent of the public think about seeing an allergist to treat asthma, yet government guidelines recommend the use of a specialist in asthma care (usually an allergist) when immunotherapy or additional testing is indicated.
- Almost half of allergy sufferers (48 percent) classify their allergies/asthma as serious or severe/life-threatening; according to government guidelines, these are the types of patients who would greatly benefit from seeing an allergist.

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