

## **Asthma management and the allergist: Better outcomes at lower cost**

It's been nearly two decades since the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared asthma an epidemic. It made the disease a priority of its Healthy People objectives in a call for *Action Against Asthma*, a strategic plan to tackle the growing public health threat of asthma. [1] At about the same time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created the National Asthma Control Program (NACP) [2] and asthma management increasingly became a model for new strategies in managed care. Before 1999, there was limited knowledge and understanding about asthma control and the interventions and treatments that worked. Since then, there is increased awareness about this complex disease and numerous initiatives designed to address, analyze and control asthma in the United States and around the world.

Yet despite these efforts and significant scientific advances in the diagnosis, treatment and overall management of asthma, prevalence of the disease has increased over the years and asthma control remains a problem. One study found that 50% of adults and nearly 38.4% of children had uncontrolled asthma. [3]

- Asthma is among the most common chronic diseases among children and adults.
- The disease continues to be a major source of global economic burden in terms of both direct and indirect costs, including \$82 billion annually in the U.S. [4] An estimated 80% of costs are the result of asthma that is poorly controlled. [5]
- Because asthma cannot be cured, efforts to reduce costs should focus on better disease control, including improving access to care and better adherence to evidence-based therapies that can significantly reduce the economic burden. [6]

When managed aggressively by a specialist, asthma does not have to be a life-threatening or disabling disease. The condition can be controlled so that acute asthma exacerbations are avoided in most patients.

Curbing the asthma epidemic, preventing needless suffering and premature deaths and controlling runaway costs of treating the disease continue to be priorities for the nation's allergists and health care policymakers. Most other developed and developing countries also have policies that address this major, but manageable, worldwide health problem. [6]

As asthma specialists, allergists have consistently led the way in advancing asthma management and demonstrating in practice that they provide high quality, cost-effective asthma care. The allergist also is in a unique position to convey important information to the medical community about factors that influence the course of asthma, methods to assess levels of control and new targets for intervention. By enhancing communication among patients, parents, primary care physicians and specialists within provider systems, the allergist provides timely information that can help to reduce asthma morbidity and mortality. [7]

The entire report – [Better Outcomes at Lower Cost](#) – has recently been updated (2020) and is available for download from the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology website. For more information about the College and asthma, please go to: [www.acaai.org](http://www.acaai.org)