

ALERT

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ASTHMA MORTALITY by Kenneth D. Rosenman, MD

In Michigan, between 2002 and 2003, there were 288 deaths that were due to asthma. These deaths are even more tragic because they could have been prevented. With proper care and medication, asthma can be controlled and people with this disease can live healthy and normal lives. Yet, asthma deaths in the United States have doubled since the 1970's. Asthma mortality rates (the number of asthma deaths in a population) in Michigan were higher than the mortality rates for the United States for all age groups except for adults aged 65 years or older.

Most asthma deaths were among males (58%) and African Americans (63%). Most deaths also occurred in people with low incomes or lower levels of education. There are several possible reasons for this, including a lack of appropriate medical care by a physician, living near pollution, and working in certain jobs that lead to more exposure to asthma triggers.

In 2002, the Michigan State University (MSU) Department of Medicine and the Michigan Department of Community Health partnered to develop a system of investigating asthma deaths among children and young adults between the ages of 2 and 34 in Michigan. The MSU staff reviews autopsy results and medical records and talks with the patient's next of kin to develop a summary of the person's asthma care and experiences. This summary is then reviewed by two panels of asthma experts; one focusing on children and the other adults. The panels are composed of health professionals, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists as well as social workers. They are asked to look at the circumstances surrounding each death and make a list of suggestions that could prevent other asthma deaths.

In the 2003 report, the asthma panels have decided on one main reason for mortality. They have concluded that many patients are not taking the correct medicines to control their asthma. Instead of using an inhaled steroid to reduce swelling within their airways, they depend too heavily on their quick relief inhaler to manage their asthma, which was not enough. Doctors can be a part of the problem too. Some doctors may not prescribe inhaled steroids when patients need them.

In order to prevent asthma mortality, the expert panels suggested programs that teach patients and health care providers more about asthma medicines and how to use them, especially steroid medicines. It was also suggested that doctors and pharmacists need to make sure patients are not over-using their quick relief inhaler. If a person has to take their quick relief inhaler more than two times per week or refill their prescription more than twice a year, their asthma may not be under control. If that is the case, then it is important to talk to a doctor about asthma medication, especially inhaled steroids, right away.

If you would like to read the 2003 Annual Report on Asthma Deaths Among Individuals age 2-34 in Michigan, please visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org for more information. ❄️

Dr. Ken Rosenman is a Professor of Medicine and Chief of the Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at Michigan State University. He is also the principal investigator for the Asthma Mortality Review Panel.

In order to prevent asthma mortality, the advisory panel suggests programs that teach patients and health care providers more about asthma medicines and how to use them, especially steroid medicines.



- ❄️ There are about 147 deaths due to asthma in Michigan each year, or 14.6 deaths per 1,000,000 people.
- ❄️ The rate of death for blacks is 4 times higher than that for whites - 41.5 per 1,000,000 versus 10.5 per 1,000,000.
- ❄️ Adults 65 years and older have the highest asthma death rate compared to other age groups.

Source: Michigan Resident Death Files (2001-2003), Bureau of Epidemiology, Michigan Dept. of Community Health.



ASTHMA COALITION COLUMN



Focus on: Asthma Network of West Michigan

The Asthma Network of West Michigan (formerly the Pediatric and Adult Asthma Network of West Michigan) is one of the 14 independent local asthma coalitions in Michigan.

Since 1994, this asthma coalition has worked tirelessly to achieve their mission: to improve the lives of all individuals with asthma by providing educational and professional expertise. Based at Saint Mary's Mercy Medical Center, specially trained professionals work with adults, parents and children on ways to cope with this disease.

On November 1st, PAANWM formally changed its name. "PAANWM was too long. It didn't reflect who we really are: the ASTHMA NETWORK of West Michigan" says Karen Meyerson, RN, BSN, and AE-C. "It cuts to the chase and makes it much easier."

Currently the Asthma Network of West Michigan is promoting their first ever fundraising event, "Asthma Idol: Sing Your Lungs Out!" scheduled for Thursday, March 23, 2006. This exciting night of karaoke will help raise funds so that the Asthma Network can continue their services in the community. Their services include in-home asthma case management which helped over 350 families last year.

If you are interested in participating or sponsoring a singer in the Asthma Idol Karaoke Contest, please call 616-732-8984 for more information. To find out more about the Asthma Network of West Michigan, or to find a coalition near you, visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org and click on Coalitions. ❄️

Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to:

MI Asthma Communication Network
c/o American Lung Assoc. of Michigan
403 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933-1179
phone: 1-866-395-8647
e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org

WINTER ASTHMA TIP: Can Your Child Go to School Today?

It's cold and flu season. And if your child has asthma, sometimes it's hard to decide if you should send him to school with the sniffles.



Your child should probably stay home if he/she:

- Has an infection, sore throat, or a fever over 100° F.
- Is still wheezing or coughing 1 hour after taking quick-relief medicine.
- Is too weak or tired to participate in his/her usual daily activities.
- Is breathing with difficulty OR breathing hard or fast.
- Measures his/her peak flow number and finds it below 65-70% of his/her personal best number, even after taking quick-relief medicine.

If your child needs to stay at home, you should call your doctor to find out if there is something more you should do to help your child get well. ❄️

ASTHMA OPPORTUNITY: Healthy Home University

Applications are now available for at least 300 Ingham County families to enroll in HEALTHY HOME UNIVERSITY, a program to help children with asthma symptoms and injury control. Each approved family will receive **free** products in their home to help reduce asthma triggers and home injuries.

Please contact Linda Stewart at Michigan Dept. of Community Health, Lead and Healthy Homes Section, (517) 335-8867 or by e-mail at stewartlin1@michigan.gov.

Also, visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org or call 866-395-8647 for more information about asthma events and trainings in your area. ❄️

MI ASTHMA CALENDAR

February

- 8 Asthma Trigger Training for Local Public Health and Medical Professionals. Holiday Inn Gateway Center, Flint. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 810-257-9558

March

- 23 Asthma Idol: Sing Your Lungs Out! Donnelly Center, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, 6:30 p.m., for more info: 616-732-8984
- 23, Asthma 101: Effective Strategies to Manage Your Child's Asthma
- 30 Ellen Thompson Women's Health Center, Ann Arbor, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., \$30 registration fee, for more info: 734-712-2851

- 25 Asthma Information Review (AIR) Course Michigan Heart and Vascular Institute, Ann Arbor, 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m., for more info: 734-677-6772

April

- 17 Summit of Michigan Asthma Coalitions Henry Center, Lansing, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 517-484-7206



Support the American Lung Association of Michigan in May...to find a Blow the Whistle on Asthma Walk near you, call 1-800-Lung USA or visit www.asthmawalk.org