



University of Connecticut Health Center

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Connecticut Health: Spotlight on Asthma

Connecticut Schools, Indoor Air Quality, & Asthma

The Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the UConn Health Center provides environmental health consulting and research services to schools across the state of Connecticut. The Division has developed the capacity to address problems facing Connecticut's schools regarding environmental exposures and their health consequences for school children and staff.

Health concerns arising from poor indoor environmental quality typically focus on respiratory diseases. The number of children suffering from asthma in the US is estimated to have increased by

49 percent since 1982. Not only has the prevalence of asthma increased, but there also have been reports of increased severity. Increased school absences resulting from respiratory problems affect the quality of life at school and disrupt the learning process for many asthmatic students.

Among the several factors believed to be responsible for the increased prevalence of asthma, the condition of school buildings is a likely contributor. An estimated 68 percent of schools in Connecticut report at least one

unsatisfactory environmental factor, and 18.5 percent of the schools



Eileen Storey, M.D., M.P.H. and Paula Schenck, M.P.H. (860) 679-2368

in Connecticut specifically have unsatisfactory indoor air quality (GAO Report, 1995). Children spend more than a third of their day in school

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The UConn Health Center is active in virtually all 169 Connecticut towns and works to meet a wide range of community and public health needs.

Easy Breathing: Primary Care Asthma Management

Michelle M. Cloutier, M.D. (860) 545-9442



Easy Breathing is an asthma management program for busy, primary care providers

that is used by six primary care clinics in Hartford since 1998 and 20 private practices in the greater Hartford area since 2000. The program was created by Michelle M. Cloutier, M.D., Director of the Asthma Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. The goals of *Easy Breathing* are to:

- 1) improve recognition of asthma
- 2) improve classification of asthma severity
- 3) assist providers in developing strategies and efficiencies in providing care for children with asthma, and
- 4) provide a database for research.

Through the advocacy of the Connecticut Children's Medical Center Foundation, Governor Rowland's office has recognized the importance of *Easy Breathing*, budgeting \$1,000,000 to implement *Easy Breathing* in Connecticut communities over the next two

years. The Asthma Center, in collaboration with State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, is working with the cities of Bridgeport, East Hartford, Manchester, New Britain, New Haven, and Waterbury to bring *Easy Breathing* to their community.

The goals of the *Easy Breathing* Community Initiative are to:

- 1) standardize asthma data collection across the communities
- 2) improve asthma management, and
- 3) decrease pediatric asthma morbidity in Connecticut.

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Greetings from the UConn Health Center!

As a state-supported institution, the UConn Health Center is committed to applying its resources to the needs of the citizens of Connecticut – and this includes the needs of the legislature!

On behalf of our faculty and staff, I would like to extend an offer of assistance. Whether you need consultation on a complex health issue or assistance in developing health-related and scientifically sound legislation, our faculty and staff would welcome the opportunity to support you and your staff in tackling our state's health and public health concerns.

Peter J. Deckers, M.D. Dean, Executive Vice President

Did you know . . . ?

- More than 17 million Americans are estimated to have asthma and over 5,300 deaths in the United States are attributed to the disease each year.
- Cases of asthma have risen about 75 percent since 1980, particularly among blacks and poor, inner-city populations.
- The number of children suffering from asthma in the US is estimated to have increased by 49 percent since 1982.
- More than 80 percent of people with asthma are allergic to one or more allergens.

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The greatest results in life are usually attained by simple means and the exercise of ordinary qualities. These may for the most part be summed up in these two - common sense and perseverance.
— Owen Feltham —



UCAN Control Asthma Program[®]

Better Pediatric Outcomes through Chronic Care



Melaine Peele and Joan Twiggs, members of the UCHC research team, with community health workers (860) 679-3990

Researchers from the UConn Health Center are working with four federally qualified community health centers to address the asthma epidemic among Connecticut's inner-city children. The four centers are located in three Connecticut cities, Waterbury, Bridgeport, and New Haven, which ranked among the 20 cities and towns in Connecticut with the highest asthma rates. By nature of its design, the study recruits children in Medicaid Managed Care and currently has 321 participants ages 5-18. All sites have worked together to improve asthma outcomes as asthma continues to be associated with high costs and episodic care seeking.

The three-year study has investigated ef-

fective and affordable chronic care models in primary care settings through monitoring, technology, and family-focused education. The project supports the development of an organizational environment capable of delivering chronic care, including the incorporation of a computer support system and a community health worker for each site to screen and track asthma patients. The study assesses the effect of bringing new chronic care resources to the Medicaid managed care environment on asthma outcomes in pediatric patients.

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buildings, and for many children school buildings represent the site where they experience the largest exposure to indoor air contaminants outside the home environment. Teachers, who spend more time in the environment than the children, may receive a larger dose of the offending agents and be at additional health risk.

The Division of Environmental Medicine at the UConn Health Center maintains active collaborations with school systems across Connecticut. The Division conducts environmental exposure assessments at the school sites in order to better understand the causes of the health symptoms. Efforts also focus on solving problems on a long-term basis, both by assisting schools in utilizing the EPA "Tools for Schools" package and in collaborating on research to design school building models that would be resistant to indoor air problems.

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