



Quality Asthma Care in the San Luis Valley

The Office of Professional Education at National Jewish Health (NJH), an ACCME-accredited provider and the #1 respiratory hospital in the United States for 14 consecutive years, is collaborating with Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. (VWHS), The San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center (SLVRMC), and Conejos County Hospital on a multidisciplinary performance improvement continuing medical education (PI CME) program. This initiative is designed to improve a medically underserved population by providing multidisciplinary training and support to primary care providers and teams in a rural provider network and two hospitals in Southern Colorado. The purpose of this program is to provide sustainable infrastructure, education and skill development to increase the capacity of health care providers to assess, treat and manage asthma as directed by current evidence-based asthma guidelines. A specific key function area or skill set developed through the program is the ability of health care providers to activate patients through effective communication and motivational interviewing to increase medication adherence and effective self-management.

This program is based on an identified practice gap and area of need, as well as on the outcomes from three previous NJH programs, *The Colorado Asthma Toolkit Program*, *Making the Right Diagnosis: The Need for Spirometry*, and *CAMP SLV: Comprehensive Asthma Management in the San Luis Valley*. *The Toolkit* program was a three year multidisciplinary initiative that targeted 58 rural primary care offices in Colorado. *Making the Right Diagnosis* was a multi-tactical and multidisciplinary program which combined live spirometry trainings with online learning. *CAMP SLV* was a school-based asthma management program which included the provision of an asthma self-management program for students with asthma, nurse-led case management and care coordination within the family, school and health care settings, family asthma education events, and creating asthma-friendly and supportive school environments.

This program is a collaborative initiative in partnership with Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. (VWHS), which is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center and network of primary care clinics, The San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center (SLVRMC), and Conejos County Hospital.

The San Luis Valley has a total population of about 50,000 and is a six-county region in rural southern Colorado, consisting of Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache counties. The SLV region is selected for this project because it is characterized by factors known to be associated with health disparities and a high level of asthma burden. These factors include 1) being a rural community/region, 2) having a large minority population, 3) high rates of poverty, 4) being a federally designated health professional shortage area and a medically underserved area.^{1,2} The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment presentation at the *Colorado Asthma Plan Summit* held in Denver on June 27, 2008 highlighted that the counties of Alamosa and Rio Grande had among the highest rates of hospitalizations for asthma in children. A likely contributing

factor to the high level of asthma burden experienced the SLV Region is the lack of asthma specialists, allergists and pulmonologists, and the lack of an asthma education or asthma care program in the region.

This PI CME initiative, entitled “*Quality Asthma Care in the San Luis Valley*,” is a two-year, comprehensive initiative that strives for sustainable improvements in asthma care through achievement of several goals.

- **First**, the initiative provides live interdisciplinary interactive workshops and site-specific in-clinic reviews and trainings to support interdisciplinary team delivery of evidence based asthma care that is sustainable.
- **Second**, the program develops and provides point-of-care patient education materials, in English and Spanish, as well as educational tools to help HCPs teach and communicate with patients to support effective self-management and concordance with agreed upon asthma care strategies.
- **Third**, develops and integrates an asthma-care pathway into the existing electronic health record to guide and support evidence-based asthma care and allow for continuous monitoring of quality indicators for asthma care.
- **Lastly**, the initiative selects a team of multidisciplinary “Asthma Champions” and provides them with additional training and mentoring to serve as change agents, opinion leaders, internal asthma program specialists and agents of sustainability.

Throughout this two-year initiative, learner feedback and educational outcomes will be assessed and incorporated into subsequent educational interventions with the goal of applying lessons learned to improve program strategies. This program was designed utilizing implementation and dissemination science, specifically the PRISM framework.³

Performance Improvement (Level 5) and Patient Health (Level 6) educational outcomes will be evaluated. Patient records will be pulled and assessed by a third-party educational outcomes provider in the region, the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center (RMPRC), and feedback will be provided to participants. All data will be de-identified and HIPAA compliant. A manuscript describing the program and outcomes will be written upon completion of the program and submitted for publication, and will be posted on NJH’s website, www.njhealth.org. The measurements selected for this study were developed with consideration of national performance measures from the *Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement*® and the *National Committee for Quality Assurance*.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. FASTATS: Asthma. 2009; Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/asthma.htm>. Accessed March 29, 2010.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Washington, D.C., 2007. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>.
3. Feldstein AC, Glasgow RE. A practical, robust implementation and sustainability model (PRISM) for integrating research findings into practice. *Jt Comm J Qual Patient Saf*. 2008 Apr;34(4):228–43.