

Quality Asthma Care in the San Luis Valley Program Honored

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DENVER — The National Jewish Health Office of Professional Education received an award for continuing medical education (CME) that seeks to increase the capacity of rural primary care practices to assess, treat and manage asthma. The Colorado Alliance for Continuing Medical Education (CACME) recognized the program, *Meeting the Needs of Rural Southern Colorado: Implementing Sustainable Evidence-Based Asthma Care*, with an award for “Best Practice in Collaboration.”

The program was developed to provide multidisciplinary training and support to primary care practices and hospitals in the San Luis Valley, a rural, intermountain valley located in south central Colorado. The valley is a designated Health Professional Shortage Area and a Medically Underserved Area. These two key federal designations identify areas with severe health care provider access issues and areas in need of assistance with health care delivery.

“We are extremely proud of this program, because we were able to provide sustainable help where it was needed most,” said Andrea Harshman, MHA, CCMEP, CMP, director, Office of Professional Education at National Jewish Health. Lisa Cicutto, PhD, RN, director of Community Outreach and Research at National Jewish Health, added “This region was selected for this initiative because it is characterized by factors known to be associated with health disparities and a high level of asthma burden.”

The program, which was funded by an educational grant from GlaxoSmithKline, was chaired by Dr. Cicutto, and co-chaired by Esther Langmack, MD, FCCP, CCMEP, medical director of the Office of Professional Education at National Jewish Health.

To address the needs of the community a collaborative was formed among National Jewish Health, Valley-Wide Health Systems, San Luis Valley Health Regional Medical Center, San Luis Valley Health Conejos County Hospital, the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center and Healthcare Research.

The purpose of the initiative was to educate primary care providers and to support quality improvement efforts in order to enhance the delivery of evidence-based asthma care in the San Luis Valley. The ultimate goal was to improve asthma control, thereby reducing the burden and morbidity associated with asthma in this rural area. To that end, the program focused on education and skill development and building a sustainable infrastructure, in order to increase the capacity of rural primary care practices to assess, treat, and manage asthma as directed by current evidence-based asthma guidelines. Over 70 healthcare providers in the San Luis Valley received evidence-based asthma education throughout the duration of this initiative.

Evaluation of the program highlights that providers were engaged in the initiative through a variety of program components. Providers reflected on their own practices at multiple points throughout the program, recognized their practice gaps, and addressed those gaps. Quality care design improvements were also evident, particularly with respect to changes in organizational culture, health care team functionality, and workflow redesign.

Quality improvement principles were applied throughout the project and supported the application of new knowledge and skills that led to improved asthma patient care. Lastly, asthma practice performance measures showed statistically and clinically meaningful improvements in all indicators of quality asthma care.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 114 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit www.njhealth.org.

Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization and a Federally Qualified Community Health Center with 13 primary health care delivery sites, as well as a milieu of ancillary health services, including a convenient-care clinic.

San Luis Valley Health Regional Medical Center is the largest and most comprehensive health care provider in the SLV, serving six rural counties with a population of more than 40,000

San Luis Valley Health Conejos County Hospital is a critical access hospital located in La Jara, CO with general medical hospital capabilities. The hospital includes two outpatient medical clinics located in Antonito and La Jara.

The Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center (RMPRC), our partner for data collection and is a part of the University of Colorado's School of Public Health, conducts research in partnership with schools and communities focusing on the promotion of social and physical environments that support active, healthy lifestyles.

Healthcare Research, Inc., our partner for educational outcomes and evaluation, provides quantitative and qualitative marketing research and consulting services to the health care industry, including outcomes assessments, patient satisfaction, social marketing, advertising effectiveness and strategic positioning.

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