
QUESTION: What are ways to increase community awareness about asthma?

Expert's Name: Karen L. Gregory DNP, APRN, CNS, RRT, AE-C, FAARC

Karen Gregory is an Acute Care Clinical Nurse Specialist with a specialty in asthma, allergy, and pulmonary medicine. She is a Registered Respiratory Therapist and Certified Asthma Educator. Dr. Gregory is a Past-President of the Association of Asthma Educators and serves on the Past President's Advisory Council. Dr. Gregory is employed at the Oklahoma Allergy and Asthma, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and is an Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, School of Nursing and Health Studies. She lectures on issues related to allergy, asthma and disease management and is published in these areas. Her clinical interests are in asthma disparities, disease management of chronic illness, food allergy, and eczematous disorders. She holds active memberships and leadership positions in professional organizations serving on boards, committees, and projects. She volunteers in local free clinics and enjoys cooking.



Karen Gregory's Response:

What a great time to discuss asthma awareness in the community, as World Asthma Day is May 3, 2016! World Asthma Day is an initiative that began in 1998 by the Global Initiative for Asthma and is recognized annually the first Tuesday in May. Organized by healthcare professional in more than 35 countries, World Asthma Day focuses on educating the public about the most effective ways of controlling and treating asthma.

May is Asthma Awareness Month! The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has an Asthma Awareness Toolkit you can use to raise awareness about asthma.

http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/world_asthma_day.htm

Invite your state governor or mayor to proclaim May as Asthma Awareness Month in your state or community!

Asthma educators understand the complexity of asthma and see first hand the barriers and challenges patients with asthma frequently encounter. Community awareness can significantly impact the approach toward improving asthma outcomes. Creating supportive communities using multifaceted interventions are interactive processes that could influence health. Creative strategies can provide the key to successful asthma awareness for the community.

Community Health Workers play a key role in ensuring health and well-being of the community and should be at the forefront in establishing asthma awareness. Community Health Workers, some who are Certified Asthma Educators, provide valuable information about the community's health needs and can strengthen current relationships with community networks.

Annual community health fairs offering pulmonary function testing, asthma education, and other resources provide a vast awareness of asthma to the community. Invite local health care providers to serve as guest lecturers addressing asthma education and management.

Coordinate health fairs with asthma coalitions, school nurses, the local American Lung Association, local governments, church groups, stakeholders, businesses, and school districts.

Missed school days due to uncontrolled asthma can impact educational achievements. Back-to-school health fairs provide an excellent opportunity to promote asthma awareness. Asthma education referencing students with asthma and asthma management at school should be made available to all school personnel, coaches, and school nurses. Asthma screenings, asthma education materials for parents, school-based or web-based asthma clubs for student with asthma and their families, friends, teachers and other school personnel promote asthma awareness and demonstrate successful clinical outcomes.

The local news media can be an effective partner for disseminating asthma management and prevention messages. Local television or radio- talk shows can host asthma educators or health care professionals to address community asthma awareness.

Community centers, local gyms, and fitness clubs can host an annuals asthma walk or run to be dedicated to promoting unity in the community for achieving asthma control and promoting asthma awareness. Health care professionals can be invited to address optimal treatment, including pre-exercise warm-up and post-exercise cool-down routines used reduce or prevent exercise-induced bronchospasm.

Support groups provide patients with asthma and their families or caregivers to share common experiences, discuss strategies to successfully managing a chronic illness, and emotional and

practical support. Community coffee shops, local restaurants, local hospital, or other medical facilities can host support group meetings.

Sharing asthma awareness strategies and successes with health care professionals around the globe are key components toward achieving asthma awareness. It is our duty as asthma educators to promote asthma awareness in the community.

Websites for Asthma Awareness Month

1. American Association for Respiratory Care

<http://www.aarc.org/aarc-celebrates-asthma-and-allergy-awareness-month/>

2. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

<http://www.aafa.org/page/asthma-and-allergy-awareness-month.aspx>

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/world_asthma_day.htm

4. United States Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov/asthma/asthma-awareness>

5. Association of Asthma Educators

<http://www.asthmaeducators.org>