A COMPARISON OF PRACTICE PATTERNS AMONG CERTIFIED AND NON-CERTIFIED ASTHMA EDUCATORS

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Background: Asthma educators are essential for providing patients with the knowledge and skills needed to control asthma. The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional survey was to examine the differences in practice patterns between certified and non-certified asthma educators and evaluate regional differences in practice patterns based on location in the United States. Methods: The participants (n = 98) included certified asthma educators (n = 66) and non-certified asthma educators (n = 32) who provided asthma education directly to patients and their families. Participants were asked to complete a 31-item survey which assessed the frequency of tasks related to asthma education. Results: Certified asthma educators reported higher frequency scores on 11 of the 31 variables. There was no difference between certified asthma educators and non-certified asthma educators for 18 of the 31 variables. Non-certified asthma educators reported higher frequencies than certified asthma educators for the variables Explain the definition of asthma control and loss of control, and controlled versus not well controlled, and Refer a patient to an asthma specialist if needed. The largest difference in reported means between certified and non-certified asthma educators was for the variable Diagnose asthma with certified asthma educators reported higher frequencies. The least frequently reported variable for both groups was Perform or interpret the results of bronchial challenge (i.e. exercise or inhaled agents such as methacholine). For regional differences, results indicated a statistically significant difference in the variable Help the patient identify factors that contribute to chronic and acute asthma like identifying triggers (p = .042). No statistical difference was found in any of the other variables. Conclusion: The results suggest that there is little difference between the practice patterns of certified and non-certified asthma educators and little difference based on regional location.
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