



# **National Asthma Council Australia**

**Annual Report 2007/08**

**Leading the attack against Asthma**

The National Asthma Council Australia (NAC), a not-for-profit organisation, is a collaboration of:

- The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Asthma Foundations of Australia
- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy

## Vision

A community that recognises the impact of asthma as a social, economic and health issue, whose members share responsibility for the elimination of asthma and minimising the risk of asthma.

## Mission

To improve the quality of life and health outcomes of people with asthma and associated conditions by enabling health professionals through education opportunities and the production of resources on best practice, driving asthma management through health promotion and advocacy to government, and setting the standards for asthma care by developing and disseminating the treatment guidelines for asthma.

## Corporate Goals

The NAC is the leading authoritative national body for asthma. Its corporate goals are to:

- Maintain asthma on the public and political agenda
- Play a leading role in advocacy for asthma, collaborating and communicating with stakeholders in order to facilitate change in asthma management to improve health outcomes
- Provide state-of-the-art evidence-based resources and educational opportunities for health professionals, particularly GPs, pharmacists, asthma educators, practice nurses, allergists, and respiratory, general and paediatric physicians
- Conduct health promotion activities directed at improving asthma health outcomes
- Employ staff and engage experts who have the capacity to carry out the NAC's work
- Ensure financial viability of the organisation
- Ensure the NAC holds to corporate governance practices in accordance with the Corporations Law and other relevant legislation.

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# Chairman's Message



It is difficult to believe that nine years have gone by since joining the National Asthma Council Australia (NAC) board! The organisation has changed greatly and there have been enormously positive developments.

Prior to joining the NAC, it was apparent that the needs of the stakeholders were paramount and that promoting the public profile was a duty of all board members. In my term as a director, and as chairman, the support of the board, committees and the administrative staff in achieving these goals has made this a great pleasure! The NAC's determination to keep the profile of asthma high in the community arena means that we issue regular press releases targeted at the most appropriate media. Our press reports indicate that we are getting better than expected national coverage for asthma every month. We respond regularly to media representatives asking for advice on specific issues and have been able to call on an extensive list of national, expert spokespeople to address any asthma-related topic, often at short notice.

The structure of the NAC with its five major stakeholder members is in many ways ideal to service the community's needs. At both professional and consumer levels, the organisation covers the areas of pharmacy, general practice, allergy, respiratory medicine and patient needs. Along with many other experts and organisations in Australia, our member bodies have all contributed to the *Asthma Management Handbook*, which is the nationally agreed basis for asthma treatment in Australia. This process has been most successful, with both good penetration and proven implementation of our evidence-based guidelines following hard-copy distribution and, of course, website accessibility.

The NAC and its member bodies provide leadership in asthma, having developed the National Asthma Strategy Implementation Plan, and the National Asthma Strategy 2006–2008 with the Department of Health and Ageing. We have also provided solutions to community needs – national public education campaigns, health professional and consumer resources, far reaching programs including our

A-Teams, and access for all to asthma information. Whilst our focus is on health professionals, one of our member bodies, Asthma Foundations Australia (AFA), is delivering national programs to consumers. We are all supported and encouraged in our work by the Australian Government's commitment to asthma as a National Health Priority Area for which we have and will continue to devote our energies.

We strive at the NAC to inform all our target audiences – patients, GPs, pharmacists, respiratory physicians, respiratory scientists, asthma educators and practice nurses – and make special efforts to reach our rural and remote colleagues and to provide resources to medical and pharmacy students. The era of electronic communication has given us a distinct advantage and we must thank Impagination, our webmaster, for their excellent product in the NAC website.

It is rewarding that we have an established outreach to many Asia-Pacific countries and can share our strategies and resources with them. Each country is unique but the common thread is to improve the health outcomes of people with asthma and related respiratory conditions.

It is important for the NAC and AFA to develop a closer working relationship and to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). It is encouraging to see, at CEO level, constructive collaboration on a range of national issues. If, at some time in the future, we are to aim for one Australian respiratory body, then it is time to start now. We should accept each other's differing practices and move to a demonstration of agreement through an acceptable MOU. Much of my time as Chairman has been devoted to seeking a unified direction for our organisations and due credit must be given to the many in other organisations who share this vision.

I would like to thank my fellow directors, the staff of the NAC and our enthusiastic supporters around Australia for their work on behalf of the NAC over the past year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "J. Wilson".

Professor John Wilson  
BSc(Hons), MBBS, PhD, FRACP, FCCP  
Chairman



# Chief Executive Officer's Message



The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, one of our five member bodies, and until recently, our kind and generous landlord, requires a very special thank-you from the NAC. We lived happily in the College for twelve years.

The College now needs more space, and the NAC having expanded its staff, also requires bigger premises. We shall miss the College environment but the close ties with the College will remain, and we have only moved a few blocks down the road.

The NAC has had a very busy year and provided educational opportunities for well over 10,000 health professionals. We have conducted two satellite broadcasts through the Rural Health Education Foundation and many A-Team® workshops in Divisions of General Practice, especially in rural and remote areas. We are very grateful to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for making this possible, as well as our Spirometry Workshops in Divisions. These started in May and already the demand is very high. It is very rewarding to have this response which reflects the hard work by members of our General Practitioners' Asthma Group and of the Australia and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Scientists.

Most of our educational opportunities are for GPs, pharmacists, practice nurses and asthma educators and are designed to be as interactive as possible. This year we've also had the opportunity to take part in workshops or meetings in Taiwan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Malaysia and Guyana. There is always a lot of interest in national guideline development and implementation, Australia's transition to CFC-free inhalers and the strategies we use here to improve asthma management.

We have continued to develop our cause-related marketing program, Sensitive Choice, and that provides us with opportunities to deliver messages on asthma management in many different promotional ways to people with asthma. We are able to use the funds generated by this program to support asthma care, reflecting the program's tagline, 'Supporting asthma care'. We also work with our Sensitive

Choice partners to invest back into the program. The major activity in this respect was the production of a booklet, 'Living with asthma and allergy', which was an insert in *Better Homes and Gardens* in May. We received lots of positive feedback from our Sensitive Choice partners and quite a number of queries on asthma and allergy issues from concerned readers. It was an opportunity to deliver useful messages to the many readers of *Better Homes and Gardens* about asthma and allergy management.

We have had lots of advice and help from our Finance Committee, Pharmacists' Asthma Group, General Practitioners' Asthma Group and the Product Advisory Panel for Sensitive Choice. Members of our committees are always willing to give us advice, act as sounding boards and suggest new initiatives. We are really pleased to be working with the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of New Zealand on Sensitive Choice and this has increased our information sharing on other issues. We continue working closely with the Pharmacy Guild Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society Australia as we gradually move towards the roll out of Asthma Care Pharmacies.

The support of our five member bodies is very important to many aspects of our work:

- The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Asthma Foundations of Australia
- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy

And, of course we must thank our national network of health professional volunteers, who contribute much of their expertise and time to our various projects.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kristine Whorlow".

Kristine Whorlow  
Chief Executive Officer

# Special Features

## Spotlight on Ron Brittain AM



Ron Brittain was one of the founders of the NAC or National Asthma Campaign as it then was. In the late 1980s, a group of experts and asthma stakeholder representatives came together to take action on asthma, spurred on by media reports on the increasing death

rate and an NHMRC report on *Asthma Associated Deaths*. Ron was the CEO of The Asthma Foundation of NSW (AFNSW), a position he occupied from 1982 to 1997. As a representative of the Asthma Foundations, he joined the early group developing the first national activities which led to the formation of the NAC.

Ron's interest in health issues had a long background; he had previously been the CEO of the Autistic Children's Association of NSW in the early days of appreciation of autism. He brought to his work in the asthma field a great understanding of the patient's viewpoint and needs.

The embryonic NAC was fortunate that he was one of the early visionaries who realized the need for national and coordinated programs to combat asthma. Along with the other founders, he dedicated much time and effort to the early national public consumer campaigns of the NAC, and to the roll-out of educational workshops to provide health professionals with up-to-date information on asthma based on the first edition of the NAC's *Asthma Management Handbook*, following the publication of

the Thoracic Society's asthma treatment guidelines in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

His work at AFNSW was well known and appreciated. The AFNSW was the largest funder of asthma research outside the NHMRC, and Ron devoted much time to developing and increasing funding reserves for this purpose. Under his guardianship the AFNSW funded the first asthma educator position at Royal North Shore Hospital, the first funded in NSW and probably Australia. This impetus contributed greatly to the development of the role of asthma educators and Ron ensured that the AFNSW assisted the development of the then Asthma Educators' Association of NSW.

He brought his considerable skills, knowledge and contacts to the NAC, becoming a director when the NAC became a company, serving on the Finance Committee, and was made Chairman in 1996. So far, he is the only non-medical director to have served as Chairman, underlining the great respect with which he was held. When the NAC appointed its CEO, Ron shared with her his great knowledge of the field, and was always willing to help her with any issue.

He represented the NAC in many forums and was a dedicated supporter and contributor to its work. In 1996, he represented the NAC in Amsterdam at an early meeting of the then International Asthma Council and insisted they appoint a Medical Advisory Committee to better inform their work.

Ron received an AM in recognition of his services for asthma and, although now retired, he is always remembered by the NAC for his kind, courteous, constructive and wise counsel.

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## Media Relations Report

The 2007/08 reporting period saw the National Asthma Council Australia further extend its profile thanks to an ongoing integrated public relations program, resulting in extensive media coverage within both consumer press and health professional publications.

A key plank of the NAC's media relations strategy is the provision of regular, timely and topical media releases.

During the 2007/08 financial year, 15 media releases were developed on a wide range of topics from the launch of the revamped online Asthma Action Plan library and information on new asthma resources for Indigenous Australians to seasonal information on autumn dust mite numbers and Christmas survival tips.

As well as promoting its own resources and key asthma management messages, the NAC issued media statements relating to a number of high profile news issues that occurred during the year including

the introduction of new smoking laws in New South Wales and Victoria; the relaxing of Australia Defence Force entry requirements for people with asthma; and, the release of the latest asthma death statistics.

In addition to proactively providing media comment, the NAC's public relations consultancy, Ward Communications, is the first point of call for journalists developing asthma-related stories and reports.

The consultancy receives between three and five unsolicited media enquiries a week and maintains an extensive database of expert spokespeople who

have kindly indicated their willingness to provide comments to the press on behalf of the NAC.

Media targets for the NAC range from the smallest regional community newspaper and individual Divisions of General Practice newsletters to national television news, talkback radio and the regular GP and pharmacy magazines, as well as online newsletters and websites.

During 2007/08, NAC print media coverage alone achieved a total circulation of more than 25,924,852. This figure excludes coverage achieved for the Sensitive Choice program, which was also extensive.

## Website Report

The NAC website provides internationally recognised, evidence-based asthma information to support health professionals in their management of people with asthma.

With more than 600 content pages, the website served over 1.5 million page views to more than 666,000 visitors during the 2007/08 year.

A key objective for the website is to enhance the NAC educational activities. While the *Asthma Management Handbook 2006* remains a leading resource, it is the online version of *Spirometry: The Measurement and Interpretation of Ventilatory Function in Clinical Practice* that has edged ahead in page views and together they now represent almost one out of every five pages accessed (18%).

Highlights this year include an additional 5000 visitors each month viewing 9,400 more pages and another annual increase of 25% in page views for the asthma information brochures and papers. These publications include the 1–8 series developed in 2004 and

more recent information papers on allergic rhinitis and leukotriene receptor antagonists, and accounts for 11% of all page views on the website.

Subscribers to the monthly email *Newsletter* have grown a further 7% to 2,750 and newsletter page views reached nearly 55,000 for a 10.6% increase over last year.

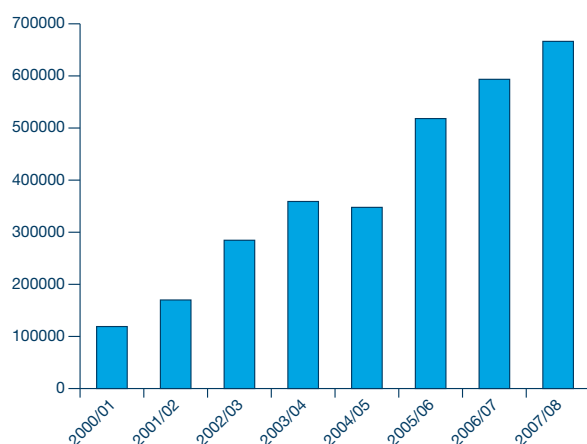
“For a medically orientated website, it's a breath of fresh air.”

*Australian Doctor*, 5 October 2007

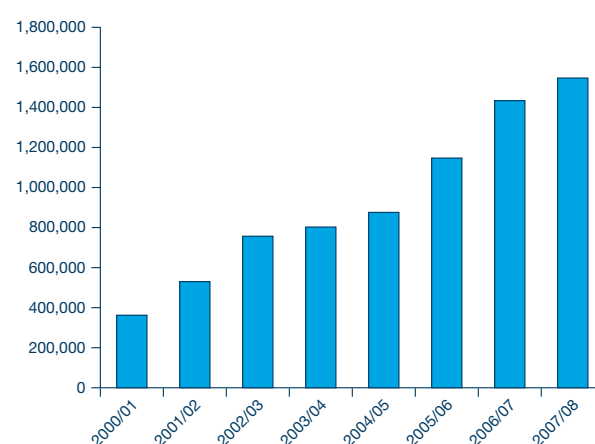
An important role for the NAC is to act as a source of accurate and reliable information online. The NAC continues to be a partner with the Australian Government online health initiative *HealthInsite* and the website has international accreditation from Health on the Net Foundation (HONcode).

During 2008/09, the NAC website will upgrade to a content management web platform with the ability to provide additional online applications and flexibility.

**Annual visitors**



**Annual pages viewed**



## Special Features

### Recognition of David P. Johns



**Assoc. Prof. David P. Johns**  
*Principal Research Fellow  
Menzies Research Institute  
and School of Medicine  
University of Tasmania*

David has been a very close friend and colleague of the NAC since 1994 when the NAC found funding to publish

*Spirometry, the Measurement and Interpretation of Ventilatory Function in Clinical Practice*, which he and Professor Rob Pierce had written. David and the NAC office worked very hard to bring this out in 1995, and had to overcome significant problems with incompatible graphic software. *Spirometry* was widely distributed to health professionals throughout Australia and overseas, and is still one of the NAC's most popular publications. David has revised it twice, most recently early in 2008, to bring it in line with the new international guidelines of the American Thoracic Society and the European Respiratory Society. It is one of the most visited resources on the NAC's website. From this sprang the *Pocket Guide for Spirometry*, published by McGraw Hill, of which David is the leading author.

David's contribution to the NAC on spirometry continued with the *Spirometry Users' and Buyers' Guide* by Dr Debbie Burton, Ms Maureen Swanney and David, which was published on the NAC website in 2005. This extremely useful guide has been updated a number of times by David. He has

also been a regular contributor and adviser to the *Asthma Management Handbook*, the treatment guidelines for asthma produced by the NAC, and made an extensive contribution to the 2006 edition. In the same year he was the leading author of 'National survey of spirometry ownership and usage in general practice in Australia' published in the journal *Respirology*. This study was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing at the NAC's suggestion.

At the end of 2007, after well over two years' hard work with Dr Debbie Burton and members of the NAC's GP Asthma Group, David was a leading presenter at the first of the NAC's spirometry workshops for GPs, held for the GPs of the Australian Defence Forces. He also put an enormous amount of work into attaining accreditation for this course from the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand and his own professional body, the Australia and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Scientists. These spirometry workshops, at which David is regularly a presenter, are extremely popular.

David's contribution to the NAC has been extraordinary and is ongoing. He continues to provide advice on all sorts of topics to the NAC and is also a media spokesperson on lung function issues. It is dedicated health professionals like David who enable the NAC to provide excellent resources and training opportunities. And, apart from all this work for the NAC, David is a positive and flexible team player, setting high standards but appreciating the realities of medical practice.

The NAC cannot thank him enough.

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### Sensitive Choice Program Report

Sensitive Choice will have been operating for nearly 3 years by the end of 2008. Looking back to the launch of the program in early 2006, the team at the NAC could not envisage that the program would grow so quickly or prove so popular. We continue to be pleased and surprised with the interest and growth.

Each year, the NAC polls consumers to benchmark their interest and recognition of the Sensitive Choice program. In 2008, 88% of respondents had a "very favourable" opinion about the program and 9% of respondents recognise the butterfly, similar to the 2007 poll.

Consumers report that the butterfly symbol helps

them identify companies committed to producing products and services that may benefit people with asthma and allergy. The butterfly symbol would influence their purchasing decision.

#### Program partners

There are currently 116 products that have been reviewed and accepted by the Product Advisory Panel, including products distributed in both Australia and New Zealand. A number of new partners came on board in 2007/08, including some well-known brands:

- Australian Food Innovators: Fresh Attitude CheekyChewz fruit bars
- Bekaert Textiles: mattress ticking
- Clorox: Greenworks home cleaning products range



- KarnDean International: Walkatex and Flotex non-woven carpet
- Rockcote Enterprises: EcoStyle paint range
- Valet: central ducted vacuum system

Some partners joined only the New Zealand program:

- AberGas: Bonaire Vulcan central heating unit
- Ellis Fibre: wool, polyester and down pillows and duvets
- Rinnai: energy saver gas heaters
- Wattle NZ: Taubmans EcoProof interior paint system

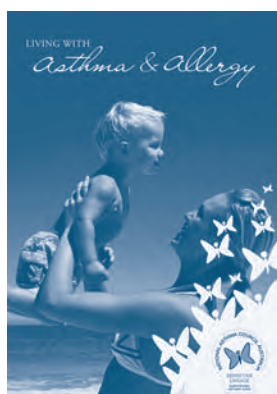
Many program partners joined the NAC at the annual Partner Forums, held in July 2007 and June 2008. The positive feedback indicates that partners old and new find this annual forum valuable, with the partner case studies particularly appreciated.

### Living with Asthma & Allergy

The NAC, in conjunction with its Sensitive Choice partners, produced the first edition of a new mini-magazine packed full of tips and advice for people with asthma and allergy.

The 30 page mini-mag, titled 'Living with Asthma & Allergy', was available as a free add-on bonus with the May 2008 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*. The mini-mag was also published in full on the Sensitive Choice website.

It contains comprehensive information on the symptoms and triggers of both asthma and allergy, as well as advice on how to manage these conditions and the benefits of having an up-to-date written asthma action plan. The popular 'First Aid for Asthma' chart is reprinted inside the back cover, providing quick access to clear advice if an asthma emergency arises.



Living with Asthma & Allergy  
May 2008 edition

Respected NAC and Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy publications form the basis of the medical content, which was developed in consultation with general practice, pharmacy, allergy and respiratory experts.

The mini-mag also showcased the growing range of Sensitive Choice registered products.



Welcoming some new partners at Sensitive Choice Partner Forum 2008 (from left): Kristine Jones, Tasman Insulation New Zealand; Merissa Mathew, KarnDean International; Kristine Whorlow, National Asthma Council Australia; Bob Matthews, Rockcote Enterprises; Glenn Alexander, Ellis Fibre

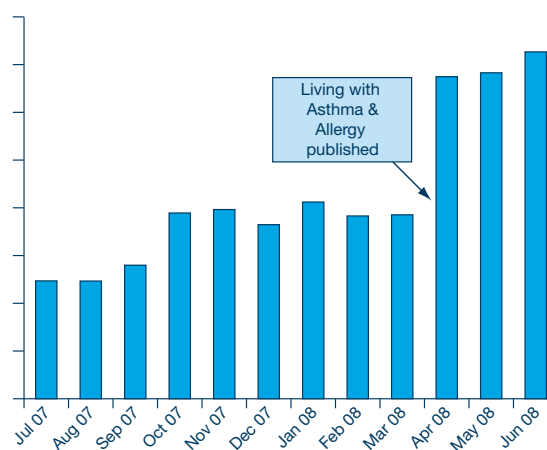
The success of this innovative cooperative advertising publication means a new edition will appear in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in November 2008. It is intended that the guide will be published annually in spring in future.

### Website visitors increasing

The Sensitive Choice website continues to increase in popularity. Visitor numbers are on a steady upwards curve matching the rise in the profile of Sensitive Choice. Visitors are also staying significantly longer and accessing more pages on the website, helped by new content such as the 'Living with Asthma & Allergy' guide. The longer a visitor stays, the more likely they are to explore other parts of the website and come back to the site in the future.

Visitor numbers increased 250% and page views increased by 207% for the year 2007/08.

### Sensitive Choice website monthly visits



## Special Features

### Promotion of Sensitive Choice to the public

Sensitive Choice is a guide for the public on products that could be of benefit for their asthma and/or allergies. A key element of the growth of Sensitive Choice is to promote the logo and website to the general public.

The annual advertising plan consisted of small space advertisements in magazines and newspapers as well as publishing an annual 'Living with Asthma & Allergy' guide. The increase in website traffic indicates a rise whenever there is advertising occurring.

Small space advertisements have appeared in:

- *Better Homes & Gardens*
- *Good Health & Medicine*
- *New Idea*
- *That's Life*
- *The Age*
- *TV Week*
- *Woman's Day*

### Spreading the word about Sensitive Choice

News about the Sensitive Choice program has been steadily growing since the program was first introduced in 2006.

During the 2007/08 financial year, as the number of products accepted onto the Sensitive Choice

register increased, so too did media exposure of the blue butterfly.

Thanks to a combined PR push by the NAC and many partner companies, total circulation for print coverage achieved over 2007/08 was in excess of 5,195,510. This included high profile exposure in some of Australia's most popular metropolitan newspapers including *The West Australian*, *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide) and *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney).

Promotion of the Sensitive Choice program by the NAC and individual partners collectively helps build awareness and the value of the brand for all participants. The PR push will be maintained during the next financial year as a key component of the NAC's integrated marketing support program for Sensitive Choice.

### Sensitive Choice in New Zealand

Many of the Sensitive Choice partners distribute products into Australia and New Zealand. Through a partnership with the Asthma & Respiratory Foundation of New Zealand (ARFNZ), the NAC is able to offer manufacturers Sensitive Choice exposure in New Zealand.

The ARFNZ is experiencing strong interest in the program. They are planning to host their first partners' meeting in 2009, which will provide an opportunity to look at further collaborative advertising and other initiatives.

## New Defence asthma standards

People with intermittent or mild persistent asthma are now eligible to apply for the Australian Defence Forces following a revision of the medical entry standards.

Respiratory physician Prof. Lou Irving, Group Captain, RAAF Specialist Reserves, and key driver of the change, joined Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Defence, in announcing the new standards to a substantial media contingent at the Herald-Sun Careers Expo in Melbourne on 27 July 2007.

The NAC and Asthma Foundations Australia have welcomed the new standards as a highly innovative development by the Australian Defence Forces, a move that reflects the recent advances in asthma management, education and understanding. The Australian Defence Forces are leading the way in rationalising recruiting standards for mild asthmatics.

The NAC will provide practical support for implementation via asthma training and resources for Defence medical personnel.



Defence asthma standards announcement (from left): Prof. John Wilson, Chairman, NAC; Sqn Ldr Jody Karran, Senior Military Recruiting Officer, Defence Force Recruiting Vic; Prof. Lou Irving, Director of Respiratory Medicine, Royal Melbourne Hospital; Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Defence; Dr Jenny Firman, Chief Medical Officer, Defence Force Recruiting; Brigadier Tony Gill, Director General, Defence Health Services. *Photograph courtesy John Brown Photography Services.*

# Activity Highlights

## GP and Allied Health Professional Asthma Education Program

Part of the Australian Government's Asthma Management Program, the NAC's GP and Allied Health Professional Asthma Education Program (GPAHPAEP) aims to improve the health outcomes for all Australians with asthma. Representatives of key stakeholders form the Steering Committee that oversees the program, providing strategic direction, national quality standards, and a national evaluation and quality improvement strategy.

With funding from the Department of Health and Ageing for 2006–2009, the NAC is conducting three main activities under GPAHPAEP: the ongoing A-Team® Asthma Education Program, a national spirometry training course and a series of satellite broadcast programs.

The NAC is indebted to the dedicated health professionals involved in the development and delivery of these important educational activities.

### A-Team® Asthma Education Program

The NAC's A-Team® Asthma Education Program has continued to deliver up-to-date asthma education workshops for GPs, practice nurses, pharmacists and allied health professionals with Divisions of General Practice across Australia.

The content of the current workshop series focuses on the Asthma Cycle of Care. Each workshop session also covers 2–3 extra asthma topics chosen by the host Division of General Practice from the A-Team education modules.

More than 60 workshops were held in the 2007/08 financial year, reaching more than 1500 health professionals. Highlights include workshops held in remote areas such as Fitzroy Crossing and in correctional facilities such as Truganina Remand Centre.

The NAC has now comfortably met its contractual commitment of 66 workshops held over the 3-year period with more than 50% in rural or remote areas. Further workshops will be held in the remaining time if resources permit.

Independent evaluation is underway with very positive results so far.

## National Spirometry Training Course for GPs

The NAC's National Spirometry Training Course for GPs is the product of an extensive consultation and development process, culminating in endorsement by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science (ANZSRS) and the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ). Respiratory scientists and members of the NAC's GP Asthma Group worked hard to develop this course.

Run as a 6-hour interactive program, the course is designed to provide participants with comprehensive training in the application, measurement and interpretation of expiratory spirometry in general practice. The course is a Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Category 1 CPD activity and an ANZSRS and TSANZ accredited spirometry training course for GPs. Practice nurses may also attend.

The new course was kicked off with a pilot workshop for Australian Defence Forces medical officers in November 2007. Wider implementation began in early 2008 and the workshops are now in full swing. The NAC has been overwhelmed with requests for the course and is well on track to meet the commitment of 48 workshops.

### Satellite broadcast program on asthma management for Indigenous Australians

The NAC has developed three satellite broadcast programs with the Rural Health Education Foundation (RHEF) under GPAHPAEP. The target audience for the broadcasts are rural and remote GPs, pharmacists, practice nurses, Aboriginal health workers and asthma educators. The RHEF expects to reach up to 5,000 health professionals each program through the initial satellite broadcasts and the RHEF website.

The NAC's satellite broadcast program *Asthma Management in Indigenous Australians* was broadcast on 11 December 2007. The program focussed on the cultural and medical issues surrounding effective asthma management in Indigenous communities.

The program was a facilitated expert panel discussion chaired by Dr Norman Swan, ABC Radio National health reporter. The panellists were:

## Activity Highlights

- Prof. Anne Chang, paediatric respiratory physician, Brisbane
- Assoc. Prof. Graeme Maguire, outreach and respiratory physician, Cairns
- Dr Penny Abbot, general practitioner, Western Sydney Aboriginal Medical Service
- Mr Chris O'Brien, Aboriginal health worker, Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service
- Ms Anne Bastian, asthma educator and Asthma Foundation NT, Darwin

According to RHEF, feedback from the program has been extremely positive.

## Satellite broadcast program on combination therapy

*Balancing the Benefits: Asthma and Combination Therapy Update*, was a satellite broadcast program developed by the NAC with RHEF. The program was broadcast on 20 May 2008 with support from AstraZeneca.

The program provided an update on the latest developments in the combination therapies used for asthma, including the SMART regimen.

The program was a facilitated expert panel discussion chaired by Dr Norman Swan, ABC Radio National health reporter. The panellists were:

- Assoc. Prof. Matthew Peters, respiratory physician, Sydney
- Dr Clive Tucker, general practitioner, Purga, QLD
- Mr Stephen Hughes, community pharmacist, Sydney, and NAC Pharmacists' Asthma Group member
- Ms Judi Wicking, asthma educator, Melbourne, and NAC Project Officer

According to RHEF, the outcome from this program was excellent. The responses from viewers suggested that both the level of interest and the quality of the program were extremely high.

## Publications

### Leukotriene receptor antagonists information paper

An updated version of the information paper on leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs) in the treatment of children with asthma was published by the NAC in July 2007, supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia).

The writing group consisted of Prof. Craig Mellis, Prof. Peter Van Asperen and Prof. Colin Robertson,

paediatric respiratory physicians, Dr Kerry Hancock, GP, and Ms Toni Riley, community pharmacist, assisted by Ms Jenni Harman, medical writer. Other contributors were Dr Sandy Anderson, respiratory scientist, and Assoc. Prof. Mimi Tang, paediatric allergist and immunologist.

The revised information paper had quite an impact, making the front page of *Medical Observer* and being widely reported in other medical media. Channel 10 News Adelaide and *The West Australian* also featured the recommendations.

## Spirometry handbook updated

One of the NAC's most popular resources – *Spirometry: The Measurement and Interpretation of Ventilatory Function in Clinical Practice* – was revised in March 2008.

Now in its third edition, the Spirometry handbook was updated to reflect new international standards and mirror the content published in the *Asthma Management Handbook 2006*.

Author Assoc. Prof. David P Johns, respiratory scientist, made changes relating to the equipment used, patient procedures and updated reference values. The changes to the new edition of the handbook focus on maximising the repeatability of the test through the optimum use of accurately calibrated equipment and appropriate patient-related procedures that encourage maximum patient effort.

The updated handbook, available freely on the NAC website, is required pre-reading for health professionals participating in the NAC's spirometry training course and is also a valuable refresher resource for health professionals who have already undertaken spirometry training.

## Peak expiratory flow chart

A new peak expiratory flow (PEF) chart was published on the NAC and Woolcock Institute of Medical Research websites in November 2007. The chart was designed to enable easy identification of changes in lung function and to overcome the confusion caused by the disparity of charts in circulation.

Developed by Assoc. Prof. Reddel and her colleagues at the Woolcock and the Asthma Centre at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, the new PEF chart is user-friendly for both patients and clinicians.

## GP Review

The NAC continued to publish regular articles in the RACGP bimonthly magazine *GP Review*. Themes



are chosen to coincide with topical issues or NAC activities. The NAC is grateful for the expert contributions of the following authors:

- July 07: Oral effects of asthma inhalers – Dr John Banky (dentist)
- Sep 07: Patient-centred health care in primary care – Dr Ron Tomlins
- Nov 07: Diet and asthma – Dr Victoria Smith
- Mar 08: Asthma in Indigenous Australians – Dr Penny Abbott
- May 08: Asthma and obesity – Assoc. Prof. Ian Charlton

### Inhaler education campaign for veterans

The NAC is creating two education resources as part of the 'Prevent Puffer Problems' campaign developed by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to improve inhaler device use in veterans. The NAC's resources are an information paper for health professionals and a series of short instructional videos for patients. Both resources will be published on the NAC website.

Scheduled to be launched in November 2008, the campaign is a collaboration of:

- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- National Asthma Council Australia
- Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Pharmacy Guild of Australia
- The Australian Lung Foundation
- Australian General Practice Network.

### Inhaler device information paper

The information paper for health professionals will focus on the prevalence of poor inhaler technique, improvements in health outcomes seen with improved inhaler technique and ways to improve technique, presented as simple practice points and tips.

A medical writer, Ms Jenni Harman of Meducation, has been engaged to prepare the information paper under the guidance of an ad hoc expert panel. The panel is:

- Assoc. Prof. Helen Reddel, respiratory physician, Sydney
- Dr Gary Kilov, general practitioner and NAC A-Team member, Melbourne
- Dr Iman Basheti, research pharmacist, Sydney
- Dr Jenny Gowan, pharmacist and HMR facilitator, Melbourne

- Ms Naomi Fenton, asthma educator and NAC A-Team member, Wyong

### Inhaler device instructional videos

A series of short web-based videos will be developed to demonstrate correct device use with the five main types of asthma and COPD inhaler in the Australian market.

There will be six separate 2-minute videos, each showing the correct technique for one device: a standard metered dose inhaler (MDI) with spacer, standard MDI without spacer, Autohaler, Accuhaler, Turbuhaler and Handihaler.

Each video will show an asthma expert, Judi Wicking, explaining the technique to a patient, an older man or older woman, who will then demonstrate. The videos will include subtitles to aid comprehension.

## Conferences

### APSR Congress 2007

At the request of the Asia Pacific Society of Respirology (APSR), the NAC hosted a session at the APSR Congress at the Gold Coast in December 2007. The 2-hour session was chaired by Ms Kristine Whorlow, CEO, and explored 'Asia-Pacific models of advocacy and implementation'.

The speakers represented a number of Asia-Pacific asthma organisations with whom the NAC has been working:

- Spectrum of respiratory disease in Bangladesh: current trends and practices  
– Prof. Md. Rashidul Hassan, Bangladesh Lung Foundation
- The total easy asthma management (TEAM) pilot study  
– Datin Dr Aziah Ahmad Mahayidin, Asthma Council Malaysia
- Asthma management in Sri Lanka: the challenges and practicalities  
– Dr Manil Peiris, National Asthma Council Sri Lanka
- The strategy for improving asthma management in Taiwan  
– Prof. Sow-Hsong Kuo, Taiwan Asthma Council
- Development of early asthma management in Korea  
– Prof. Sang-Heon Cho, Korea Asthma and Allergy Foundation
- A simple tool to achieve asthma control  
– Dr Adisorn Wongsra, Thailand Asthma Council

## Activity Highlights

- Guidelines implementation
  - Prof. John Wilson, National Asthma Council Australia

### Bangladesh Lung Foundation conference 2008

The Bangladesh Lung Foundation held Bangladesh's first international medical conference in February 2008 and invited a number of international speakers. Those from Australia were:

- Prof. Norbert Berend – COPD: Regional approach for promoting better care
- Assoc. Prof. Ron Tomlins – Managing asthma in a primary care settings; What resources do we need for better asthma care?
- Ms Kristine Whorlow – Phasing out CFC inhalers: why and how?; Treatment guidelines: development and implementation for primary care physicians

### GPCE Melbourne 2007 and Sydney 2008

The NAC presents regular seminars at the GP Conference and Exhibition (GPCE).

At GPCE Melbourne in November 2007, the NAC presented a seminar with support from Glaxo-SmithKline Australia. The 1-hour seminar, 'Asthma and COPD: an update on diagnosis and treatment,' focused on five key issues in asthma and COPD: clinching the diagnosis; asthma control vs severity; asthma management strategies; COPD screening; and COPD management strategies.

Dr Gary Kilov, GP, and Dr Christopher Worsnop, respiratory physician, delivered an interesting and informative presentation to an audience of more than 80 GPs. The evaluation responses were extremely positive.

The NAC's seminar at GPCE Sydney in May 2008 was supported by Schering Plough. The 1-hour seminar, 'Asthma and Allergy: what's the connection?', covered differential diagnosis and practical strategies for management of concurrent asthma and allergy.

Prof. Connie Katelaris, allergist and immunologist, and Assoc. Prof. Ian Charlton, GP and NAC GP Asthma Group member, delivered a dynamic and engaging presentation using multiple-choice questions answered via interactive keypads to great effect.

The seminar was one of the most subscribed sessions of the conference, with almost 100 GPs attending despite the seminar being scheduled as the last session of the last day.

### IPCRG Seville 2008

The NAC's A-Team® asthma education program was internationally recognised for its innovative format and successful outcomes at the International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG) world conference in Seville in May 2008.

Judi Wicking, A-Team project officer, presented an abstract titled 'The A-Team®: A national asthma education program, the Australian way' to a captivated audience of health professionals from around the world at the IPCRG conference.

The abstract was selected for publication in the June 2008 issue of the *Primary Care Respiratory Journal*.

A preliminary evaluation of the first 9 months of phase 3 of the program, which began rollout mid 2007, was presented at the IPCRG conference. As at end March 2008, more than 1000 health professionals had attended 45 workshops across Australia. In post-workshop evaluations, nearly all (97.7%) respondents reported the program 'somewhat' or 'considerably' increased their knowledge of evidence-based asthma management practice.

### TSANZ Annual Scientific Meeting 2008

Assoc. Prof. Jo Douglass presented the NAC breakfast session at the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) Annual Scientific Meeting in March 2008. Titled 'More hair of the dog? Immunotherapy in respiratory allergies', the presentation covered the latest in immunotherapy including the advantages and disadvantages of sublingual therapy.

## Asthma Research Awards

The NAC funds annual awards to encourage research into asthma. Offered via the NAC's individual member bodies, the awards focus on asthma research presented at each organisation's annual/biennial scientific meeting or conference.

Dr Peter Vuillermin from Geelong Hospital won the 2007 ASCIA and NAC Asthma Research Award for his presentation, 'A cross-sectional comparison of anxiety symptoms among primary school children with and without asthma.'

Dr Cristan Herbert from the University of NSW won the 2008 TSANZ and NAC Asthma Prize for his presentation, 'Enhanced expression of cytokines by CD4+ T cells in an acute exacerbation of chronic asthma'.

The RACGP and NAC Asthma Research Award, and the AFA and NAC Asthma Research Award were not presented in 2007/08.

### Friends of Asthma in Parliament

More than 40 federal MPs have united to form the bipartisan group Friends of Asthma in Parliament, a joint initiative of Asthma Foundations Australia and the NAC following on from the NAC Parliamentary Association formed in 1998.

At the launch at Parliament House on 8 August 2007, Assoc. Prof. Guy Marks addressed a captive audience including The Hon. Brett Mason, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and Ageing, and Mr Mick Hoare, Director, Asthma and Arthritis Section, Department of Health and Ageing.

Among the MPs present at the launch were Senator Trish Crossin, Senator Guy Barnett and Mr Brendan O'Connor MHR who, along with Dr Andrew Laming MHR, were key to the group's formation.

Following the launch, free spirometry was conducted in a prominent position in Parliament House between the smokers' courtyard and a popular coffee spot. With the support of Micro Medical (Cardinal Health), more than 40 MPs, parliamentary staffers and journalists were tested.

It is hoped that Friends of Asthma in Parliament will raise asthma awareness and promote the significance of asthma in policy development and implementation.

### Asia-Pacific Activities

The NAC's outreach activities in the Asia-Pacific region have continued this year, led by the CEO, Ms Kristine Whorlow.

#### GP Asia Pacific Respiratory Board

In early 2008, the NAC formed this board with GP representatives from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand,

Vietnam and chaired by Assoc. Prof. Ron Tomlins of Australia. Members are working to develop the role of the GP or GP equivalent in Asia Pacific and to improve the management of COPD and asthma. Meetings were held in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur with the support of GlaxoSmithKline Asia-Pacific.

#### Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Lung Foundation held Bangladesh's first international medical conference in February 2008. The conference featured three Australian speakers, including the NAC's CEO. The NAC was pleased to provide advice during the planning of the conference.

In 2007 the CEO attended meetings of the Bangladesh Lung Foundation.

#### Malaysia

The CEO continued to work with the Asthma Council Malaysia on its business plan and assisting in the development of sponsorships.

#### Taiwan

In January 2008, the CEO was invited to present on 'Running asthma education programs in Australia' at the Chang Gung Hospital, Taipei.

#### Sri Lanka

The NAC has continued to assist the National Asthma Council Sri Lanka and the Primary Care Respiratory Group, which is affiliated with the International Primary Care Respiratory Group of which the NAC is a founding member.

#### United Nations Environment Program

As an Australian Government nominee to the UNEP Medical Technical Options Committee (MTOC), the CEO attended its annual meeting in Japan. She has also represented MTOC at national workshops in the Maldives, Malaysia and Guyana to advise on the development of national strategies to phase out the use of CFCs in asthma inhalers.

# Supporters

The NAC is able to carry out its important work thanks to the generosity of its sponsors and supporters.

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