



PROMOTING THE USE OF PERSONAL ASTHMA ACTION PLANS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Background

Written asthma action plans provide people with asthma with personal guidance on the action to take when their condition worsens. They are known to improve clinical outcomes and are recommended as good practice in asthma care. However, there is evidence that they are under-provided by health professionals, under-utilised by those with asthma and not always updated following treatment changes.



Nicola Ring
Lead researcher

“It would be good if primary care teams could promote the use of personal asthma action plans and be very proactive in inviting people for review and on-going care all the time reinforcing the use of personal written plans. But we really need more research to be able to advise the best ways of promoting action plans.”

Aims and methods

This review was commissioned by Asthma UK (Scotland) and NHS Quality Improvement Scotland to investigate how best to encourage health professionals to promote asthma action plans and help people with asthma to use them

It involved a systematic review of randomised controlled trials published between 1960 and 2006. These were searched using multiple electronic databases. Unpublished and on-going studies were identified by contacting asthma experts internationally. Only trials that reported outcome data for specific interventions to promote the use of action plans were included.

Key findings

- There is already good evidence that proactive asthma management (including patient education, individual actions plans and regular review) results in better care.
- There is a currently a lack of robust evidence on the best and most practical ways to sustain the use of personal asthma action plans, BUT.....
- Several interventions including patient self management education, promotion and reinforcement of action plan use, school asthma clinics and systematic asthma management systems have all been shown to increase ownership or initial use of action plans. Further research is required to determine sustainability.
- Few studies provide details for patients of different genders, ethnicities, socio-economic

backgrounds or ages. This makes it difficult to understand which interventions will work best among different patient groups.

Recommendations

- Primary care teams seeking to promote action plan use should consider implementing proactive practice-based organisational systems. Annual asthma reviews provide opportunities for distributing and reinforcing the use of action plans
- Multi-disciplinary teams working in areas where asthma action plan ownership and use is low should consider how interventions can be incorporated into existing practices and healthcare systems.
- Further research is required to assess the practicality of different interventions and their effect on sustaining use long-term



Further information: full report available on www.ascr.ac.uk

Researchers:

Nicola Ring, Sally Wyke, University of Stirling; Aziz Sheikh, Hilary Pinnock, University of Edinburgh, Steve MacGillivray, University of Abertay, Gaylor Hoskins, University of Dundee.