

# Improving the Care of Children with Asthma in Emergency Sydney Children's Hospital

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## Problem

Asthmatics who present to emergency with an acute exacerbation often have deficiencies in acute and long-term asthma management, resulting in repeated acute presentations. Presentation to emergency provides an opportunity to improve care through education and promoting continuity of care. We aimed to reduce the 3-month representation rate by 30% within 6 months and sustain the improvement. The diagnostic phase revealed that lack of written asthma action plans, inadequate use of preventer medication and poor continuity of care were the high priority areas. The standard of documentation was often poor.

## Aim

To reduce the number of children with asthma representing to emergency within a 3-month period by 30% within 6 months and sustain the improvement.

## Planning and Implementation

- We provided asthma action plans, advised medical follow-up care for all children who presented with asthma and created an asthma assessment proforma to prompt key management issues.
- We engaged emergency department staff and taught them how to complete asthma action plans. We ensured that the plans were available and requested triage nurses to insert them in the patient notes on presentation.
- We alerted parents that they should have an action plan and should prompt their doctor to write one.
- We advised that all children who presented to emergency with acute asthma should be referred to the doctor who usually cares for their asthma within several days.
- We devised an asthma assessment form that became part of the medical record. The form prompted key points in history and examination to assist assessment and treatment of the acute episode, background pattern and discharge planning.

## Outcomes and Evaluation

Weekly review showed that completion of asthma action plans increased from 0 to 80% and referral for medical review from 30 to 80%. The representation rate for acute asthma fell by 23% in the first 3 months and was reduced by 12% for a year.

