

Statement of the Problem

One component of effective asthma management is establishing a relationship with the health care provider that allows for exchange of information and shared-decision making regarding asthma monitoring and treatment. The Expert Panel recommends that clinicians should “involve adult patients in the treatment decision making within the context of a therapeutic partnership.” (This also applies to parents/caregivers of children with asthma.) Source: Expert Panel Report, pg. 100.

Background

The goal of the patient-provider relationship is to establish a partnership that allows the patient to clearly understand the goals of asthma treatment, to understand and be able to take medications appropriately, to be able to monitor asthma control effectively and to be aware of when medical help is necessary. Creating a relationship that enables these things to happen leads to improved health outcomes.

ASSESSMENT

- Assess caregiver’s comfort level in communicating with their main medical provider. Review baseline interview questions related to patient-provider communication:
 - Does office staff at your doctor’s or health care provider’s office or clinic treat you with courtesy and respect?
 - Do your health care providers listen carefully to you?
 - Do your health care providers explain about asthma in a way you understand?
 - Do your health care providers spend enough time with you?
 - Do your health care providers really explore how you try to manage your/your child’s asthma on a day-to-day basis?
- Is the caregiver comfortable communicating with the provider in English? If not, does the provider speak the client’s first language fluently or is an interpreter always available? If an interpreter is used, ask how the client feels about working with the interpreter (e.g. does the client think the information is being translated accurately? Is confidentiality being respected? Is the interpreter available when needed, both in the office and on the phone?)
- Determine when the caregiver’s last visit with their health care provider was. Patients with asthma should see the doctor or health care provider at least 1-2 times per year, and more often if their asthma is not well controlled. Does the caregiver have a regular health provider who sees her/him at each visit?
- Ask if the caregiver has experienced any difficulties in accessing his/her primary provider (e.g. long wait for appointment, unable to reach by telephone, transportation problems, paying for services, missing school or work to make appointments, etc.).

Educational Messages

- The health care provider and you are a team. You must all work together to manage your/your child's asthma so you can stay healthy and active.
- The important things to remember include:
 - See your provider once or twice a year for an asthma check-up.
 - Bring a list of questions or concerns with you to each visit.
 - Be prepared to tell your doctor about how well your/ your child's asthma has been in control in the past 2 weeks. For example:
 - How often has coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath kept you/your child awake at night?
 - How often have you/your child needed to use your rescue medication?
 - Has coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath interfered with work or play?
 - Have you/your child had coughing or wheezing with exercise?
 - Have you/your child needed urgent care or been hospitalized?
 - Bring your/your child's action plan to the visit or ask the provider for one if you don't have one.
 - Bring all of your/your child's medications to the visit. Tell the provider about any side effects or difficulty taking medication.
 - Continue to ask questions until you understand the instructions/information the provider is sharing with you.
 - Ask for an after visit summary so you can refer to it if you have questions when you get home.
- Good communication with your provider is very important. If you are having a hard time communicating with your provider or getting appointments, your community health worker may be able to come to an appointment with you to help you talk to your provider about it.
- It is OK to be assertive when you communicate with your providers, that is, make sure that the provider understands your concerns and gives you the help you need.
- You are more likely to get what you need if you communicate with the provider in a way that makes him/her feel respected and useful.
- To facilitate communication with your health care provider you can write down your questions and concerns about asthma ahead of time and take your list to your next appointment. This will help you remember all the things you want taken care of at the appointment.
- No question is too small to ask. Keep asking questions until you understand. Tell the provider if you don't understand something and ask him/her to explain it in a different way. Ask the provider to write the information down. You can't do what the provider suggests unless you understand it.
- If you need an interpreter, ask for one when you make your appointment.

Actions

CHW ACTIONS	CAREGIVER ACTIONS
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess for any difficulties in communicating with the provider that the caregiver is having including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barrier • Access to care issues • Problem in communicating specific issues and in understanding the provider’s directions. 2. Determine if the caregiver needs resources e.g. interpreter services or project nurse intervention to assist in solving communication problems. 3. Inform the client needing interpreter services that interpreters are available for regularly scheduled appointments and no delay should be anticipated in waiting for an interpreter to arrive. 4. Encourage caregiver to schedule visits with the provider and to go prepared to ask questions, take all medications, talk about recent asthma control, take or ask for asthma plan, get visit summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe to CHW any problems in communication you are having with your/your child’s provider. • Schedule visits 1-2 times per year for evaluation of asthma • Make a list of questions/concerns regarding asthma • Review asthma control level over past 2 weeks—any problems with symptoms, recent ER visits/hospitalizations? • Take all medications to the visit. Discuss concerns about side effects or problems in taking them • Bring/ask for an action plan • Ask questions until the provider’s directions/information are understood • Ask for a visit summary (verbal & written if possible) • Bring a support person if this will help you feel more comfortable. • Find out when your next appointment should be scheduled • Keep phone numbers handy for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medication refills • Appointments • Nurse • Emergency care
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Follow-up Visits

Supplies

Blank asthma action plan

Education Handouts

Referrals

Specific strategies to address access problems:

Problem	Things client can do
No primary provider.	Request that clinic assign a single provider.
Can't make an appointment.	Call clinic to reschedule.
Inconvenient appointment times.	Request Saturday or evening appointments. If none available, ask for a telephone appointment.
Long wait for appointment.	Make appointments well ahead of time. Switch to another provider who has shorter waits. (Ask to speak to the provider or nurse and see if they will find an earlier appointment.) If your caregiver needs immediate attention, call the clinic and say you are coming in now. Write a letter to the clinic manager.
Visits or medicines cost too much/ can't understand bill.	First tell your provider. Then ask to speak with clinic social worker or manager.
Can't get transportation to clinic.	Speak with the social worker or tell your provider. See if a friend or family member can help. See if a cab voucher is available.
Not getting needed services or referrals.	Ask clinic staff to make an appointment for the service or arrange a referral.
Translator is not always available.	Ask to speak with clinic social worker or manager.

Sources: NCICAS manual