

Keeping kids out of the hospital: Asthmania Academy at AnMed Health

“Asthmania Academy is one of 3 programs in the country to hold the American Association for Respiratory Care's Asthma Self-Management Education (ASME) certification - something we are really proud of and something that we believe shows a commitment to improving life for children with asthma”

Mike Shoemaker

Background

<p>1 <u>Asthma can be controlled.</u> yet is a leading cause of pediatric hospitalizations, sick child doctor's visits, emergency room visits, and missed school days.</p>	<p>2 Children with asthma (and their families) get <u>very mixed messages</u> regarding asthma.</p>	<p>3 <u>Consistent use of nationally recognized guidelines</u> to guide patient education and disease management has an incredible positive impact on asthma outcomes.</p>
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Back in 2008, AnMed Health's approach to inclusive strategic planning facilitated the incorporation of pediatric asthma as a line item in the organizational plan. In January 2009, AnMed Health started the Asthmania Academy, which is one of 3 programs in the United States with [Asthma Self-Management Education \(ASME\) certification](#).

Infrastructure

The center of operations of the Academy is an Asthma clinic that is staffed by certified asthma educators, respiratory therapists, and pediatric hospitalists on demand. The clinic started operating one day a week, and has since expanded to two days per week. Interestingly, the clinic was possible through a re-allocation of internal resources, as opposed to new funding.

Asthmania Academy Process

- Children with uncontrolled asthma are referred to the Asthmania Academy from several points of care.
- Asthmania Academy staff performs lung function testing, provide individualized asthma education, and co-develops a family centric written asthma plan which is reviewed with an Asthmania Academy physician.
- The Patient leaves the visit with a better understanding of how to self manage their condition, a written action plan with copies for the school nurse and extended family, and phone and email contact information to reach a certified asthma educator.
- The Patient's Primary Care Physician, which could be part of the AnMed Health System or an Independent practitioner, receives: a report with EPR-3 Guideline-based recommendations, a copy of the patient's written asthma action plan, and a copy of diagnostic study results.

Results

When comparing outcomes in 2013 with 2008 (pre-Asthmania Academy), AnMed Health has achieved:

- 46.0% reduction in the number of pediatric asthma hospitalizations
- 52.5% reduction in pediatric asthma patient days
- 12.0% reduction in average length of stay for pediatric asthma

Key to success

- **Leadership support:** Pediatric asthma is part of AnMed Health's strategic plan. The Asthmania Academy Coordinator was given latitude to choose the best way to keep children with asthma out of the hospital. The Quality Coordinating Council at AnMed Health oversees and supports the implementation of the Academy.
- **Coordination:** Children in the Asthmania Academy have a single guideline based, family-centric, asthma plan that all caregivers agree on.
- **Community engagement:** Recognizing that health care is only one part of the puzzle in the pursuit of better health for children with asthma, Asthmania Academy staff spends part of their time working with community members such as peer parent educators of Family Connection, School Nurses, and independent pediatricians, so that they are better suited to support children in controlling their condition.

“In the long run, we are going to see lower volume of visits due to asthma, not necessarily because of the direct action of Asthmania Academy staff, but because all of our partners are helping us keep children healthy and out of the hospital”

Mike Shoemaker

- **Funding:** Additional sources of funding for the program come from diagnostic testing, and from CPT codes 98960, 98961, and 98962 that Blue Cross Blue Shield has agreed to reimburse for asthma education regardless of where the education is provided.

What does Asthmania Academy need to further enhance their effectiveness?

- Reimbursement from other payers (besides BCBS) for asthma education provided outside of the hospital
- Students or academics that can help translate the reduction in hospital stays and ED visits to cost savings
- Help from insurers providing data about the Asthma Medication Ratio for participants of the Academy and users of AnMed Health System. (This is the SC Health Coordinating Council indicator around pediatric Asthma)
- Sources to subsidize expensive diagnostic tests for uninsured children
- More stakeholders willing to support children being healthy and connect with the Asthmania Academy (mold control, community members aware of how can children with asthma play outdoors safely, impact of second hand smoke, etc)

Coming up

- Targeting schools with highest prevalence of uncontrolled asthma
- Finding ways to use telemedicine
- Increased involvement with the Community Health Workers (CHWs) of the project Breath Easy at Family Connection.

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