

HARBOUR HEALTH LAUNCHES ASTHMA GASP TOOL

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of asthma in the world, affecting one in 6 New Zealanders



Harbour Health has recently completed a pilot using a web-based Asthma Assessment & Decision Support software tool, called **GASP** (Giving Asthma Support to Patients), which supports the treatment of people with asthma. The GASP tool has the potential to transform asthma patient management & is already showing promising results in a six month pilot programme. The tool was also reviewed & approved by Professor D. Robin Taylor & the Asthma & Respiratory Foundation in New Zealand.

The web-based tool, believed to be the first of its kind, was developed by Wendy McNaughton Respiratory Programme Manager for Harbour Health & Murray Speight, IT specialist, from Comprehensive Health Services. Wendy, said 'the GASP tool grew out of a passion to improve asthma management, give patients more control & a better understanding of asthma through education.'

A patient at Silverdale Medical Centre, 8 year old Damon, was diagnosed with asthma aged two. Over the following years he was treated when his asthma flared up, but it was not until he was referred to Wendy that he really understood why, when and how to use his inhalers. His Mum said Damon took on board what Wendy told him, so he was better able to understand how asthma affects him. He is now able to fully participate in all his sporting activities whereas last year, he needed frequent rests and his reliever inhaler. He is now a fun loving, a very active 8 year old boy. Anne Ashwell, practice nurse at Torbay Medical Centre, said "the tool is great to use, it is comprehensive & everything flows in a logical sequence. It provides useful information for practice nurses as well as handouts & actions plans for patients." Dr Sheryl Howarth from Browns Bay Family Doctors said "the GASP tool provides the doctor with the ability to

clearly show patients the reasoning behind their recommendations and has proved very effective in keeping patients on track."

The 6 month GASP pilot (which ended in June 2008) involved 18 nurses from five general practices & 75 patients. The following results were achieved for patients involved in the GASP pilot.:

- there were no hospital admissions for the 75 patients involved, although 7 of these patients had been admitted in the previous year.
- a reduction in emergency visits to hospital & after hour services. The number of emergency visits to general practice reduced from 29 to 5.
- a reduction in the need for patients requiring oral steroid courses. In the 12 months prior to the pilot, 31 patients had required a course of oral steroids which reduced to 4 patients during the 6 month pilot.
- an improvement in peak flow measurements, for all of the seven acute asthma patients who had been admitted to hospital in the 12 month period before the GASP pilot.

Harbour Health now plans to roll out the GASP programme to other general practices affiliated to Harbour Health as well as continuing to train asthma nurse specialists. Harbour Health also plans to complete a three year research project to track the impact of using the GASP tool alongside specialist asthma clinics.

To find out further information about the GASP tool or Harbour Health please phone: (09) 4151091 or visit our website www.harbourhealth.org.nz

