NCMA Pulmonologist Shares Insights On New Study Associated With Living With Asthma

*Northern California Medical Associations (NCMA) pulmonologist Dr. James M. Steele M.D. talks about the latest study on asthma and the necessity of managing symptoms to help keep down costs.*

SANTA ROSE, Calif. (PRWEB) January 24, 2018 -- Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently analyzed data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey to discover the financial toll asthma has on sufferers and their families. More than 213,000 respondents participated over a six-year period with 10,237 people identified with treated asthma. According to the results of the survey about 15.4 million people in the U.S. undergo treatment for asthma each year with annual costs in the $82 billion range. Those who suffer from asthma spend about $3,266 every year on medical care. Around 3,168 deaths are attributed annually to asthma.

“This survey clearly shows the impact asthma has on patients and society as well,” says Dr. James Marco Steele, NCMA Pulmonologist. “The best way to keep medical expenses down for asthma patients is to have an active treatment plan in place and to avoid triggers. Taking asthma medication as prescribed and using the quick-acting meds when needed will help to keep attacks in check for most patients.”

Understanding Asthma

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs causing recurring episodes of wheezing, breathlessness and chest tightness. Asthma patients also frequently experience nighttime and early morning coughing episodes. During an asthma attack the airways in the lungs swell and shrink. This means that less air can get in and out of the lungs. The situation becomes all the worse when mucous clogs up the airways, restricting the ability to breathe even more. An asthma attack can be scary and stressful for the person having an attack. Asthma triggers can include:

- pollen, mold, dust mites, cockroaches, pet dander
- smoke, air pollution, chemicals and strong odors
- aspirin, acetaminophen and other medications
- weather conditions
- exercise, physical activity
- emotional stress

Chronic health problems can also exacerbate the symptoms of asthma such as obesity, obstructive sleep apnea, acid reflux, stress and depression. Colds and sinus infections can also worsen asthma symptoms.

“As with most pulmonary issues, asthma can be a challenge for patients to deal with, but many people live completely normal lives with the condition, as long as it’s properly managed with the help of a healthcare provider,” explained Dr. Steele. “Our goal with asthma patients is to have a good treatment plan in place and to provide adequate education and support, so that the patient can resume a normal and active life.”

Treating Asthma
In addition to avoiding allergens that trigger asthma symptoms, drug therapies can also help. As mentioned previously, severe attacks are best dealt with by having an emergency action plan in place. A healthcare provider may also recommend using a peak flow meter to monitor the asthma. A peak flow meter is a small handheld device that measures how much air the patient is able to push out through the lungs. By tracking airflow, changes can be made to the treatment plan that may include additional behavioral or environmental changes, or possibly an alternative asthma medication.

Untreated asthma can have adverse effects on a person’s life. In addition to wheezing and coughing, asthma symptoms can cause time lost from work or school, inability to participate in activities, and occasional visits to the hospital. The best way to manage attacks and get back to a more active life is to consult with a physician. “Asthma may not be curable, but with the help of a team of knowledgeable healthcare providers, symptoms can be managed, and flare-ups reduced,” said Dr. Steele.

About Dr. Steele

NCMA Pulmonologist James Marco Steele, MD, provides diagnostics, treatment, and management of the full spectrum of pulmonary diseases including asthma. Dr. Steele is Board Certified in Sleep Medicine, Pulmonary Medicine, Internal Medicine, and Critical Care by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM). Dr. Steele offers his expertise in the following areas: sleep disorders, critical care medicine, pulmonary hypertension, adult cystic fibrosis, clinical research, and special procedures that encompass a wide range of diagnostic and interventional pulmonary medicine. For more information visit the ncmahealth.com website or call (707) 525-3786.
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