

ACCEPTABILITY AND UTILITY OF SPIROMETRY MEASUREMENT IN THE PHARMACY ASTHMA CARE PROGRAM

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This paper reports the utility of spirometry measurement by community pharmacists as a component of patient assessment in the Pharmacy Asthma Care Program (PACP). The overall aim of the PACP was to identify people with poor asthma control and improve their management.

Methods: The study was implemented in 57 pharmacies in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland during 2005. Community pharmacists were trained by respiratory scientists in spirometry technique using the EasyOne™ spirometer. The PACP included assessment of asthma severity and spirometry measurement for both Intervention and Control patients over a 6-month period. Intervention patients attended 3-4 visits with a cycle of assessment, goal setting and monitoring, while Control patients attended 2 visits 6 months apart, with no interventions beyond standard care. **Results:** A total of 351 patients (165 Intervention and 186 Control) completed the study, completion rates of 86.4% and 90.7% respectively. The spirometry results at baseline indicated reduced lung function in both groups with FEV₁ % predicted at 79.3 ± 22.8 (Intervention) and 75.4 ± 22.2 (Control) (mean ± SD). 83% of Intervention patients' tests and 85% of Control patients' tests were of acceptable quality (i.e. A, B or C) and were included in the analysis. There were no significant differences (p>0.05) in spirometry measures between groups at any time in the study. FEV₁ values less than 80% predicted were highlighted to pharmacists on the spirometry report and 61 patients received a written referral to their general practitioner for review on the basis of their spirometry. These patients may not have seen their GP if they had not been reviewed in the PACP.

Conclusion: Spirometry measurement is a reasonable and reliable test for community pharmacists to use as a basis for referral to the physician.

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