

# Review of the New Zealand Asthma and Respiratory Foundation's New Zealand Adolescent and Adult Asthma guidelines

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Dear Editor,  
The most recent version of the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation's New Zealand Adolescent and Adult Asthma guidelines was published in the *New Zealand Medical Journal* in 2020.<sup>1</sup> The guidelines had been updated to take into account recent evidence on the management of asthma: in particular, the evidence supporting anti-inflammatory reliever (AIR) therapy. An innovative approach was taken to incorporate this evidence into a simple three-step algorithm using a single inhaler as the recommended approach to inhaler treatment. Since the publication of the guidelines, AIR therapy has become widely used in New Zealand, coinciding with a marked reduction in hospital admissions for asthma.<sup>2</sup> The simple 3-step approach to AIR therapy advocated in the New Zealand guidelines has since been emulated internationally.<sup>3</sup> We believe that the adoption of these guidelines by health professionals has contributed to reducing the respiratory health burden across New Zealand. The guidelines have also been used to advocate for better access to asthma treatments, including the recent proposal to enable 3 months' supply of budesonide/formoterol inhalers and also include them on practitioners' supply orders in keeping with best practice AIR therapy.<sup>4</sup>

The expiry date for the 2020 guidelines was set for 2024. For this reason, the Scientific Advisory Board of the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation and the authors of the 2020 guidelines were invited to review the guidelines and compare these with the current Global Initiative for Asthma and other international guidelines. The consensus is that the 2020 New Zealand guidelines are still up to date and fit for purpose.

Inevitably, a few things have changed, and we note some of these here:

- Another budesonide/formoterol inhaler option has been approved and funded by Pharmac for AIR therapy—DuoResp Spiromax, in addition to Symbicort. Both are dry power inhalers. Vannair (a pressurised metered-dose inhaler) contains the same medications but is not formally approved for use as AIR therapy in New Zealand, although it has been approved overseas and appears to be widely used for this purpose.
- Although there has been no change in the biologic (monoclonal antibody) medications registered for asthma treatment in New Zealand, benralizumab is now funded as an alternative to mepolizumab for severe eosinophilic asthma in those meeting special authority criteria.
- Sodium cromoglycate and nedocromil are no longer available in New Zealand.
- Unfortunately, the My Asthma app is no longer available.

We believe that these changes in treatment availability make little material difference to the functionality of the guidelines and advocate for their continued use. We have therefore extended the guideline expiry date with a view to publishing the next update in 2027. If major new evidence emerges in the meantime, they will be reviewed earlier.

Yours sincerely,

The Scientific Advisory Board and 2020 guideline authors

**COMPETING INTERESTS**

R Hancox has received research funding from GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca, and payment for lectures and advisory boards from GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca, outside the submitted work. RH has participated in the Medical Research Institute of New Zealand; and is the medical director of the New Zealand Asthma and Respiratory Foundation. R Beasley has received institutional research funding from AstraZeneca and Teva, and personal fees from AstraZeneca, Avillion, Teva Cipla, outside the submitted work. RB was chair of the 2020 Asthma Foundation of New Zealand Adolescent and Adult asthma Guidelines group and was a former member of the Board of Directors of the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease. L Beckert has received payment for lectures and advisory boards from GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca, outside the submitted work. A Chan reports research grants from AstraZeneca outside the submitted work. AC is current clinical director for Asthma New Zealand and was previously on the Board of Asthma New Zealand and the Scientific Advisory Board for Asthma Respiratory Foundation New Zealand. She is a member of the Respiratory Effectiveness Group (REG), ESPACOMP research, policy and implementation committee, working group lead for the European Respiratory Society Clinical Research Collaboration "CONNECT" and a member of the Global Asthma Network steering group. AC reports participation on the AstraZeneca and GSK advisory boards. AC is a member of the council board of the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand; medical committee member of the Auckland Medical Research Foundation; global lead for workforce transformation of the International Pharmaceutical Federation; research lead of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association. AC has received a donation of smart spacers from Trudell Medical in support of a research project in asthma. J Fingleton reports grants, personal fees and non-financial support from AstraZeneca, grants from Genentech, grants, personal fees and non-financial support from GlaxoSmithKline, personal fees and non-financial support from Boehringer Ingelheim, outside the submitted work. JF is a past medical director of the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation New Zealand, and the past president of TSANZ NZ branch. Susan Jones has received speaker fees from GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca, outside the submitted work. Stuart Jones has received payments for presenting at GP educational events and for participation in advisory groups by both GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca. B Poot is a member of Pharmac's respiratory advisory committee. M Harwood reports a leadership or fiduciary role in the Hauora Māori Advisory Committee; MRINZ Board; MAS Foundation. N Corna reports advisory board participation for GSK; is a

member of Respiratory Foundation New Zealand Expert advisory group and Vaping EAG; and is the New Zealand co-convenor TSANZ nursing SIG. D McNamara reports a leadership or fiduciary role in the Scientific Advisory Group Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of New Zealand; and is co-chair for the Paediatric Respiratory and Sleep Governance Group, Child and Youth Clinical Networks New Zealand.

M Hurst, Z Manderson, J Reid, A Trenholme, J Turner: no competing interests.

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