



December 12, 2014

Mr. Toby Douglas
Director
California Department of Health Care Services
PO Box 997413, MS 0006
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Dear Mr. Douglas:

As the leading organizations in California working to reduce the burden of asthma, we are writing to you today to ask for your leadership in ensuring Medi-CAL implements the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute’s National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) Guidelines-based care for its asthma patients. The NAEPP Guidelines provide important evidence-based recommendations on how asthma can best be managed – which will save lives, healthcare expenditures and allow individuals living with asthma to have normal lives. At present, California has barriers in its Medi-CAL program that could prevent asthma patients from getting recommended guidelines-based treatment for their asthma.

Our organizations respectfully request that current restrictions and barriers that limit guidelines-based asthma care be lifted as soon as possible. Specifically, we ask that Medi-CAL ensures that:

- All asthma patients must have access to all NAEPP-recommended short and long-term acting medications to treat their asthma as prescribed by their health care provider. Presently, Medi-CAL has a number of barriers in place – including prior authorization or no coverage for NAEPP recommended medications – that may limit patients’ access or delay fulfillment to the medications prescribed by their physicians.

- Patients with persistent asthma have full access to both in-vitro and skin testing to determine sensitivity to indoor allergens, which will allow patients and their families to determine how to best avoid or eliminate those triggers. Presently, barriers exist to in-vitro asthma testing.
- All devices needed for the proper delivery of medications and measurement of lung function, including nebulizers, peak-flow meters and spacers are covered. Presently there are barriers, including prior authorization, to the devices recommended in the NAEPP Guidelines.

Asthma is a chronic, or life long, lung disease that affects an estimated 25.5 million Americans nationwide, including 6.8 million children under 18. In California, 8.4 percent of adults and 8.8 percent of children under 18 have asthma. Nationwide, asthma is responsible for \$50.1 billion annually in healthcare costs, 14.4 million missed school days; and 14.2 million missed days of work and costs \$5.9 billion in lost productivity each year. Asthma can be managed effectively using evidence-based practices including avoiding or limiting exposure to allergens and irritants, and using the correct asthma medications. However, the disease can be fatal if not appropriately treated.

Our organizations look forward to working with you to make sure all asthma patients in California have full access to the NAEPP Guidelines recommended tests, treatments and devices need to effectively treat and manage their asthma. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to talk more about these barriers to NAEPP Guidelines-based care for asthma, and answer any questions you may have. Please contact Kimberly Amazeen, Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, American Lung Association in California, at 916-585-7670 or Kimberly.Amazeen@lung.org to schedule an appointment or to discuss further. Our organizations will also follow-up with a meeting request in the near future.

Sincerely,

Olivia Gertz, President & CEO
American Lung Association in California

Alpesh Amin, MD, MBA, MACP, President
California Service Chapter American College of Physicians

Francisco Covarrubias, Chair
Asthma Coalition of Los Angeles County

Darcel Lee, President and CEO
California Black Health Network

Liz Helms, President & CEO
California Chronic Care Coalition

Luther Cobb, MD, President,
California Medical Association

Robert Benjamin, MD, President
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Valerie Naegele, RRT, RCP, President
California Society for Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Heidi Flori, MD, FAAP, President
California Thoracic Society (CTS)

Elisa Nicholas, MD, Director
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Heidi He, FNP-C, MSN
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Rachelle Wenger, MPA, Director, Public Policy and Community Advocacy
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Richard Barbers, MD
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Lynn Kersey, Executive Director
Maternal and Child Health Access

Don Hitchcock, MD, Chair
Napa County Asthma Coalition

Barbara B. Hines, President and CEO
Queens Care Health Centers

Anne Kelsey Lamb, MPH, Director
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP)

Scott Kessler, Chairperson
School Environmental Health and Asthma Collaborative (SEHAC)

Trudy Raymundo, Director
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Gloria Thornton, MA, LMFT, Chair
San Francisco Asthma Task Force

Shan Magnuson, Chair
Sonoma County Asthma Coalition

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