



NEWS from Trudell Medical International

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Under-Use of Corticosteroids in Children with Asthma



Around the world, asthma rates in children continue to rise. Over 300 million people are affected by asthma worldwideⁱ, particularly troubling for vulnerable populations, such as children and low-income families who may not have access to the tools they need to effectively control the disease.ⁱⁱ Although the cost to control asthma seems high, the cost of not treating asthma correctly is even higher.

Poor control of asthma symptoms commonly leads to unplanned medical visits or worse – trips to the Emergency Room. Childhood asthma is commonly treated with prescription aerosol medications, delivered through Metered Dose Inhalers and valved holding chambers which hold the medication suspended until it is inhaled. Aerosol therapies delivered through valved holding chambers are effective because they act quickly, at the site, and with fewer side effects.ⁱⁱⁱ

Current asthma guidelines recommend the use of corticosteroids in children, even under the age of 5, as the first line of defense.^{iv} Corticosteroids effectively treat the source of asthma symptoms by controlling the inflammation that can cause exacerbations. The use of a Valved Holding Chamber (VHC), such as the **AeroChamber MAX**[®] VHC, is also recommended with all patient groups to reduce systemic absorption and side effects of these inhaled medications.

Studies indicate 60% of patients have poor asthma control and that one of the reasons is poor adherence to inhaled corticosteroids. In Canada, the return to school in September generates a 200% spike in the number of hospital visits – commonly referred to as the *September Spike* epidemic.^v *September Spike* is likely the result of viral infections spreading from child-to-child in the classroom, and then being transported home to other family members.

There are now two **new** valved holding chambers specifically designed for younger patients who are ready to graduate from a mask to a mouthpiece device or who are being prescribed an inhaler for the first time. The **AC Girlz**[™] and **AC Boyz**[™] Chambers feature kid friendly designs and built-in feedback mechanisms that encourage proper inhaler technique, which may help to increase compliance in an age category known to either ignore their medication or use it incorrectly.

Ensure every patient has the tools and therapy plan to help them avoid unnecessary exacerbations this fall. Discuss the *September Spike* phenomenon with your asthma patients and take the opportunity to review their individualized asthma action plan. For those patients using Metered Dose Inhalers, prescribe **AeroChamber**[®] Brand of VHC for home and school.

ⁱ Salzman GA, Pyszczynski DR. Oropharyngeal candidiasis in patients treated with beclomethasone dipropionate delivered by metered-dose inhaler alone and with Aerochamber. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 1988;81 (2):424-428. ⁱⁱUngar WJ, Paterson M, Cope S and Kozyrskyj A. Improving Drug Benefits for Children with Asthma: Results of a Multi-stakeholder Workshop to Build a Research Agenda. *Healthcare Policy* Vol. 3 No. 4, 2008:66-77. ⁱⁱⁱSalzman GA, Pyszczynski DR. Oropharyngeal candidiasis in patients treated with beclomethasone dipropionate delivered by metered-dose inhaler alone and with Aerochamber. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 1988;81 (2):424-428. ^{iv}GINA Guidelines, 2006 ^vJohnston NW, Johnston SL, Norman GR, Dai J, Sears MR. The September epidemic of asthma hospitalization: School children as disease vectors. *Journal of Clinical Immunology*, March 2006; 117(3): 557-562.