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CONTENTS (continued)

ASM Abstracts

- The impact of respiratory symptoms on primary care workload and prescribing costs in children** 26
Jennifer Cropper, Timothy Frank, Peter Frank, Sara Kay and Marilyn James
- Why don't patients attend the asthma clinic?** 26
Kevin Gruffydd-Jones, Isla Nicholson, Lynda Best and Elizabeth Conne
- Is it possible to write a research protocol in 10 hours?** 27
Aziz Sheikh and Mark Levy
- Emergency pre-hospital care in London: How well does the ambulance service treat acute asthma patients?** 27
Helen Snooks, Chris Hartley-Sharpe, Helen Booth and Michael Rudolf

Letter to the Editor 28

Notes for contributors 29

Editorial

The GPIAG has a new chairman, David Price, who has succeeded Dermot Ryan following his three-year term of office. David, a part-time GP in Norwich and Senior Lecturer at the University of East Anglia, describes his vision for the group over the next three years on page 25.

This Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) issue of *Asthma in General Practice* contains papers intended to whet the appetite for applying an evidence-based approach to healthcare. The first two papers help us understand some of the skills required to search through the published literature as well as the need to extract and apply relevant concepts and data to our practice. There is a pilot study which demonstrates an approach to implementing some of the concepts presented in a national guideline document. We also have a number of abstracts which were presented at the 12th ASM of the GPIAG. (We only publish those abstracts that have not been published elsewhere.) Finally, there is an important letter addressing some of the problems we face in primary care with regard to spirometry.

The extensively referenced review paper by Patrick White and Graham Hewett describes the complex interplay between psychological and physiological factors that influence the clinical management of people who have asthma. They remind us of the need to listen to our patients and hear what they perceive to be the problem and the possible solutions and, more important, the fact that the patient's perception of their disease has major implications for management strategies.

Aziz Sheikh takes us through the process of seeking evidence in the literature in order to advise a patient with asthma on the use of pneumococcal vaccine. He describes a logical, methodical procedure for answering a clinical question with evidence derived from clinical research. This process may be applied to any clinical problem requiring justification for proposed treatment options.

In keeping with our policy of publishing pilot studies and early research ideas, Hilary Pinnock describes her experience of introducing a spirometry service in primary care. The publication of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) guidelines by the BTS has prompted many GPs to investigate their patients' respiratory problems more thoroughly. This paper offers us an introduction to the uses of spirometry and some of the practical issues related to the choice of instruments and investigations that may help clarify the diagnosis in many patients.

The journal is listed in EMBASE/ Excerpta Medica as well as Biosis and is published in part on our website (<http://www.gpiag-asthma.org/Asthma/GPIAG/welcome.htm>). We plan to improve the Web-based publication of the journal. Please let us have any feedback on the nature of the Web-based journal; we will try and incorporate your suggestions.

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