

In this issue..

Dr Mark L Lev

Many members met Pauline Wignall, Chief Executive of GPIAG, at our annual conference this year. In her editorial, she describes her first impressions of the group and her vision for the future. In the short time she has been with us she has helped us to focus on the important issues as well as managing the ever increasing workload. We welcome her, and look forward to together developing and extending the value GPIA provides for its members in particular and primary care in general.

In 1993, the National Asthma Campaign commissioned a survey of asthma clinics, in general practices throughout the UK. 1 Nurse from thirty per cent (4327) of all UK general practices returned questionnaires. Of note, 49 of these clinics were being run by nurses alone and of the total 22% did so without formal training entailing assessment. In this issue of the Journal (pages 106-11) we publish two local surveys (in South West England) on the role of practice nurses in asthma and COPD care respectively. In their conclusions, some of which closely concur with the NAC survey eight years ago, Jones and colleagues raise a number of issues related to training and provision of respiratory care in the community. While the nature of these surveys (particularly their subjectivity) influence our interpretation of the results, they do provide us with an insight from the nurses' perspective, those who are delivering the care for these patients; one fifth of whom have had no formal training in respiratory diseases. In her focused editorial on the subject, Jill Whatling discusses these papers and highlights the areas of concern.

These papers by Jones et al are significant, in that they help us to focus on delivery of care within the currently underfunded health service in the UK, and on respiratory disease in particular. Respiratory disease now kills more UK citizens than coronary heart disease or non-respiratory cancer, according to a report from the British Thoracic Society (BTS) published in November 2001. (www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/). The study - The Burden of Lung Disease, portrays how lung disease kills more than one in four people in the UK. We, in the GPIAG, support the BTS in their statement... "With investment and improvement already pledged for heart disease and cancer, these statistics prove in black and white that the UK Government is discriminating by disease area in the NHS. The lack of a national programme of treatment and care for respiratory disease, together with a severe shortage of chest specialists, nurses and physiotherapists, is causing patients with lung disease to suffer unnecessarily". While the UK Government and most local health service managers have decided to ignore the provision of respiratory care within the UK, we as a profession cannot afford to do so.

The other two papers in this issue of the Primary Care Respiratory Journal focus on COPD. Hoskin et al (pages 99-102) have evaluated the management of over 8000 primary care patients on practice asthma registers. The authors have highlighted an area worthy of consideration in primary care: accuracy of diagnosis in older patients on "asthma" registers. According to their GP records for the previous 12 months and a reassessment in clinic of a randomly selected sample of patients on the asthma register, older patients manifest different symptom patterns despite higher medication levels than those who are younger. Therefore, the authors have recommended that GPs consider alternative diagnoses and review management of symptomatic older patients on the asthma register.

Colin Smyth and colleagues' review (pages 103-4) on domiciliary nebulised bronchodilator therapy in COPD describes a sensible approach to prescribing. They emphasise that most patients with COPD can be treated with high dose bronchodilators delivered via hand held inhalers, and guide the reader through a logical diagnostic process leading to appropriate prescribing.

Plans for the website www.gpiag.org
We have started developing a section of the website devoted to development of ideal minimum data sets for use by health professionals in recording medical notes on computer. Medical audit has become routine in primary care practice in the UK. Good, logical, searchable medical records facilitate this process. Through the use of agreed data items, with their Read Codes (UK) and International Primary Care Codes we hope to be able to compare medical approaches to managing patients with respiratory problems. This work was initiated through a grant from the GPIAG, Glaxo Smith Kline and Merck Sharp and Dohme, which resulted in the formation of a pan-European group, EUROPAD 2001 publication of a paper² in our journal and presentations at the GPIAG and ERS conference in 2001. Anyone wishing to contribute to this work, either through participating in data collection, assisting with the development of the minimum data sets or sharing templates should contact me in the first instance (marklevy@animalswild.com).

Mark Levy, Editor

Reference

1. Barnes G., Partridge MR. Community asthma clinics: 1993 survey of primary care by the National Asthma Task Force. *QJ* 1994 **3**:133-6
2. Sheikh, A, Frank, T, Dawson, A, and Levy, M L. Identifying pan-European management goals for asthma: Participatory action research study *Prim Care Respir* 2001; **10**(3) : 69-70

Editor Dr Mark Lev
News Editor Paul Stephenson
Publications Manager Patricia Bryan

Editorial Board
Dr Chris Griffith
Dr Robert McKinley
Dr Aziz Sheikh

International Editorial Advisers
Dr Carlos Goncalves (Portugal)
Dr Svein Hoegh Henrichson (Norway)
Dr Alan Kaplan (Canada)
Dr Line Kleinbreil (France)
Dr Marianne Ostergaard (Denmark)
Dr Gunnar Johansson (Sweden)
Professor James Reid (New Zealand)
Dr Miguel Roman (Spain)
Dr Reggie Spelman (Ireland)
Dr Ron Tomlins (Australia)
Professor Thys van der Molen (IPCRG)
Professor Onno van Schayck (The Netherlands)

ISSN 1475-153

The GPIAG is an independent, multi-funded, GP-led member organisation that aims to improve respiratory care

The *Primary Care Respiratory Journal* is published by General Practice Airways Group (GPIAG) Publishing

Editorial decisions are independent of commercial restraints

The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the General Practice Airways Group (GPIAG)

© GPIAG. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the GPIAG

Correspondence concerning this journal should be addressed to the Editor

General Practice Airways Group is a company limited by guarantee (Company No. 4298947) having its registered offices at

GPIAG
8th Floor, Edgbaston House
3 Duchess Place
Edgbaston
Birmingham B16 8N

Telephone: +44 (0)121 454 821
Facsimile: +44 (0)121 454 119
publishing@gpiag.org
Website: <http://www.gpiag.org>

Trustees

Dr David Bellamy, chairperson
Dr John Haughe
Professor Sean Hilto
Mrs Melinda Lett
Dr Mark Lev