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Allergy & Asthma Network (“Network”) is the nation’s leading voice and patient advocate for more than 50 million Americans with allergies and 25 million with asthma. For 33 years, the Network has worked to end needless death and suffering due to asthma, allergies and related conditions through outreach, education, advocacy and research.

Asthma remains one of the most serious chronic diseases and costly health issues (\$80 billion annually in direct and indirect healthcare costs) in the United States.

Approximately 3,600 Americans die each year due to asthma. The disease has greater impact on vulnerable populations, including children and older adults as well as those living with other diseases. Populations that are low-income and certain ethnic groups also have a higher rate of diagnosed asthma, increased hospitalizations and deaths.

Of the millions of Americans living with allergies to the environment, food, insect venom, medications and latex, there are 15+ million at risk for a severe allergic reaction, or anaphylaxis. Symptoms of anaphylaxis vary and can include hives, coughing, shortness of breath, tongue and throat swelling, vomiting, stomach pain and shock. Severe anaphylactic reactions can lead to death. There are approximately 700 deaths annually due to anaphylaxis, and children and adolescents are among those most at risk.

Together with patients, families, healthcare professionals and industry partners, the Network seeks to ensure that federal and state laws, policies, regulations and resources support our role in achieving optimal health outcomes for people with asthma and allergies.

The following pages provide details on the key advocacy issues for Allergy & Asthma Day Capitol Hill.

Thank you for joining us. YOUR voice matters!

#AADCH2019

ADVOCACY ISSUES

- I. ACCESS TO CARE
- II. AFFORDABLE MEDICATIONS AND TREATMENTS
- III. ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FEDERAL FUNDING
- IV. HEALTH EQUITY
- V. FOOD PACKAGE LABELING

ACCESS TO CARE

Access to high-quality, affordable healthcare and insurance coverage is essential to achieve the most successful health outcomes for patients. This includes adequate coverage for patients who rely on government programs including Medicare and Medicaid. Access to innovative therapies and technologies (e.g., biologic medications, immunotherapy, telehealth, remote patient monitoring) are important to address specific medical needs and improve patients' lives.

Recommendation

- Maintain adequate coverage for individuals who rely on Medicare and Medicaid.
- Maintain adequate coverage for individuals with pre-existing conditions.
- Implementation of school-based health management programs.
- Transparent process for medications subject to step therapy.
- Use of telemedicine technologies to provide respiratory care services.

AFFORDABLE MEDICATIONS AND TREATMENTS

Access to safe, effective and affordable medicines is critical as the rising costs of prescription drug prices puts Americans at risk for poorer health outcomes, especially those with chronic and life-threatening conditions such as asthma and severe allergies. Lack of access to affordable medicines has led to patients not filling a doctor's prescription, reducing the dosage to make a supply last longer, buying medicines from foreign countries or substituting alternative therapies. Stabilized treatments are necessary for patients with chronic conditions and access to medications is critical.

Recommendation

- Reduce prescription drug costs for patients, particularly those with chronic or life-threatening conditions.
- Reduce out-of-pocket costs for low-income seniors who rely on Medicare.
- Improve access to generics and biosimilars in Part D of the Medicare program.
- Provide a separate Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) billing code and reimbursement in Medicare Part B for each biosimilar biologic product.

ALLERGY AND ASTHMA PROGRAM FUNDING

Federal health and research programs are essential to improve the healthcare quality and safety for all Americans, particularly those who live with chronic conditions.

Programs that support disease awareness, management and safety under the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are essential in the development of new treatments and best practices in care, monitoring healthcare quality, providing information to the healthcare workforce and convening stakeholders, and providing patients with healthy and safe environments.

Recommendation

- Continue funding in fiscal year (FY) 2020 for asthma and allergy research, education and outreach initiatives at:
 - HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - National Asthma Control Program
 - HHS National Institutes of Health (NIH)
 - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's (NHLBI) National Asthma Education and Prevention Program
 - National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
 - HUD Healthy Homes Program
 - EPA asthma research, education and outreach initiatives

HEALTH EQUITY

Development of health equity interventions are needed to support better health outcomes for all patients. Health disparities (e.g., access to care, poverty, environmental hazards, education inequities, language and cultural differences) cross ethnic and socioeconomic groups and impact individual health and well-being. Asthma and allergy rates are higher in poor urban areas and more common in African-American and Hispanic children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics. Proven intervention strategies (e.g., programs, services and policies) are needed to develop successful health equity interventions.

Recommendation

- Development of health equity interventions to support better health outcomes for patients in areas including:
 - Environment (indoor and outdoor)
 - Transportation
 - Education
 - Language and Culture

FOOD PACKAGE LABELING

SESAME

Nearly 32 million¹ Americans are living with food allergies. Sesame allergy has increased in recent years due in part to the growing number of products containing sesame seeds and sesame oil, including foods, cosmetics, lotions and pharmaceutical items. Exposure can lead to a severe or even life-threatening allergic reaction.

The *Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004* (FALCPA) governs how the eight major food allergens – milk, egg, peanut, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish and crustacean shellfish – are represented on packaged foods in the United States. Sesame is not recognized as a major food allergen in the United States, unlike Canada, the European Union, Israel, Australia, New Zealand and many others. In 2016, a report by the National Academy of Sciences recommended that sesame be listed as a major food allergen and identified on food labels.

Unintentional cross contact with a food allergen can occur during manufacturer food processing when a small amount of an allergenic food gets into another food accidentally, or when it is present in saliva, on a surface or an object. This small amount of an allergen could cause an allergic reaction.

Recommendation

- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should require clear and consistent labeling of sesame in foods and any potential for cross contact during food processing.

¹ Gupta R, Warren C, Smith B, Jiang J, Blumenstock J, Davis M, Schleimer R, Nadeau K. Prevalence and Severity of Food Allergies Among US Adults, JAMA Network Open. 2019