



2019 TALKING POINTS

BACKGROUND

- More than 25 million Americans have asthma, and 50 million have allergies.
- One in every 10 American children has asthma, making it the most common chronic condition among U.S. children.
- Approximately 2.2 million school-aged children have food allergies.
- The United States spends roughly \$80 billion annually in direct and indirect healthcare costs related to asthma, as well as \$25 billion for food allergies and \$17 billion for nasal allergies.

I. ACCESS TO CARE

Access to high-quality, affordable healthcare is essential to achieve successful health outcomes for patients.

Recommendation

- Maintain adequate coverage for individuals who rely on Medicare and Medicaid.
- Maintain adequate coverage for individuals with pre-existing conditions.
- Access to innovative therapies and technologies.
- Implementation of school-based health management programs.
- Transparent and clearer appeals process for medications subject to step therapy.

II. 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. Stabilized treatments are necessary for patients with chronic conditions such as asthma and severe allergies.

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 HCPCS billing code and reimbursement in Medicare Part B for each biosimilar biologic product.

III. ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FEDERAL FUNDING

Federal health and research programs are essential to improve the healthcare quality and safety for all Americans, particularly for patients living with a chronic illness.

Recommendation

Continue federal funding in fiscal year (FY) 2020 for asthma and allergy research, education and outreach initiatives:

- CDC's National Asthma Control Program
- NIH
 - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's (NHLBI) National Asthma Education and Prevention Program; and
 - National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
- HUD Healthy Homes Program
- EPA asthma research, education and outreach initiatives

IV. HEALTH EQUITY

Health disparities cross ethnic and socioeconomic groups. To support better health outcomes for patients, the development of more programs, services and policies are needed where all populations have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

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

V. FOOD PACKAGE LABELING

- Sesame allergy has increased in recent years. Exposure can lead to a severe or even life-threatening allergic reaction.
- There are eight major food allergens represented on packaged foods in the United States. Sesame is not recognized unlike in other countries.
- Unintentional cross contact with a food allergen can also occur during manufacturer food processing and 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.

VI. 116th CONGRESS (*pending bills*)

Urge your Member to support the list of Allergy & Asthma Network supported bills pending in Congress.