

*Controlling Asthma Severity: Identifying Unmet Needs  
and Optimizing Therapeutic Options*

This supplement to *The American Journal of Managed Care* provides highlights from a symposium presented during the 17th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP), which took place on April 20, 2005, in Denver, Colorado. The symposium was not part of the AMCP's official program. This supplement has been peer reviewed by an expert in the field.

**Needs Assessment**

Assessing the severity of asthma symptoms and responding with the appropriate course of treatment are ongoing challenges for managed care organizations. Although treatment guidelines exist (eg, the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma and the Global Initiative for Asthma), therapeutic decisions, particularly the choice between monotherapy and combination therapy, remain controversial. Moreover, because of the limitations of available pharmacologic therapies, including drug delivery technology and long-term adverse side effects, nonadherence to treatment is high, with estimates ranging from 35% to 50%. As the incidence of asthma in the United States has been steadily increasing, it is imperative that diagnostic and treatment guidelines are not only established and updated, but are also implemented in clinical practice within managed care organizations.

This activity will review the goals of treatment for asthma, explore how available therapeutics do or do not meet these goals, and highlight newer agents that may address some of the unmet needs in patient management. The activity also will discuss existing guidelines for asthma diagnosis and treatment, as well as the importance of improving patient education and adherence to therapy. In addition, national standards, such as the Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS), will be reviewed, with an emphasis on the importance of adhering to guidelines to meet these metrics.

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*Grant/Research support:*

AstraZeneca  
GlaxoSmithKline  
MedPointe  
Merck  
SPRI

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