

**Media release**  
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## **Tasmanian research improves asthma management**

A recent study conducted by the University of Tasmania's School of Pharmacy is helping people to manage their asthma better through collaboration between community pharmacists and GPs.

Australia has one of the highest rates of asthma in the world, with an estimated two million Australians currently affected.

It's estimated that if implemented on a national scale, this study could potentially identify and assist over 80,000 people with poorly managed asthma.

Utilising a \$100,000 grant from the Asthma Foundations of Australia, Professor Gregory Peterson from the University of Tasmania developed an innovative computer solution to assist community pharmacists use their medication records to identify people who may have poorly controlled asthma.

"The study used 'data mining' software to identify over 1500 adults as having poorly managed asthma, with half of these people encouraged to see their GP for a review of their asthma and the other half used as a control group," Prof. Peterson said.

"These identified patients were using on average, seven puffs each day of their reliever medication, which is much higher than the maximum three puffs per week recommended by the Asthma Foundation.

"What we found during the following six months was a significant shift towards more people using preventer medications, relying less heavily on their reliever medications.

"This results in better health outcomes for patients, and ultimately less burden on the health system."

The use of medication is the most common action taken by people with asthma. Regular use of inhaled corticosteroids or 'preventer medication' can reduce asthma symptoms and prevent severe episodes of worsening asthma.

Despite the obvious benefits of preventer medication, roughly only one in seven people with asthma regularly use their preventer medication.

The Asthma Foundation of Tasmania (AFT) Education and Training Manager Melanie Blackhall said the AFT was excited to be part of a study which has such potential to improve asthma management through the use of preventer medication.

“The reality is that asthma is a life threatening disease responsible for an estimated 1000 presentations to emergency departments throughout the year in Tasmania alone. It is also the number one reason children end up in emergency departments.

“Asthma is a disease which affects 55,000 people in Tasmania alone. However, many people who have asthma don’t take it seriously enough.

“This study is vital, as it has the potential to be implemented across the country assisting thousands of community members to take control of their asthma and ensure they don’t end up becoming one of the Australians which die from asthma every day.”

**ENDS**

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