

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

DATE: TUESDAY 6 MAY 2008

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Breathe easier on World Asthma Day

University of Tasmania researchers have urged asthmatics on World Asthma Day today to visit their local pharmacist following the launch of a new management program.

The Tasmanian School of Pharmacy has been conducting research during the past 18 months aimed at improving quality of life for people with asthma.

A team of researchers has developed an innovative software tool that assists pharmacists in the identification of patients who have less than optimal control of their asthma.

After successfully completing a pilot study in 35 Tasmanian pharmacies last year, the School's Unit for Medication Outcomes Research and Education will now trial the software solution for asthma sufferers visiting chemists in Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia.

Clinical Research Pharmacist and PhD Candidate, Bonnie Bereznicki said the study used a largely untapped resource - pharmacists and their computerised prescription data.

“The study's software solution can help identify patients with poor management of their asthma from their medication history, in particular a high rate of provision for reliever medication,” Ms Bereznicki said.

“These patients will be referred to their GP for review; empowered and educated to manage their asthma more effectively.”

The asthma pilot study resulted in a three-fold improvement in the management of asthma, measured by a significant shift towards more patients using prevention medications and relying less heavily on their reliever medications.

Ms Bereznicki said asthma is recognised as a national health priority, affecting more than 2 million Australians, and the community pharmacist could now play a key role in managing the condition.

“The message I would like to get out there is that people with asthma don’t have to accept their symptoms as a normal consequence of their condition,” she said.

“International research has demonstrated that, for the majority of people with uncontrolled asthma across a wide range of severities, control of asthma can be achieved and maintained with appropriate management.”

The University of Tasmania, headed by Chief Investigator, Dr Shane Jackson, is collaborating with Monash University in Victoria and the University of South Australia to conduct the study that involves general and specialist medical practice, community pharmacies and the public.

The research project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing as part of the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement, administered by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

For more information or interviews, contact: Bonnie Bereznicki, School of Pharmacy, (03) 6226 2191 or bonnie.bereznicki@utas.edu.au

Information Released by:

**The Media Office, University of Tasmania
Phone: (03) 6226 2124 – 2691 or (03) 6324 3218 (Launceston)
Mobile: 0417 517 291
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au**