Our First Issue...

The faculty and staff within the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Lung Health Center are excited to launch a new quarterly newsletter.

Through this newsletter we strive to inspire, inform, and equip our patients and their loved ones to live life to the fullest while coping with a lung condition.

We would like to thank the Novartis Pharmaceutical Company for their financial support, which has made this newsletter possible!

- Prevention
- Treatment
- Living
- Research

Giving Something Very Special to Others

The medical professionals at UAB strive to provide medicine that touches the world. Patients play an important part in reaching this goal by participating in research that supplies answers to some of the important questions doctors and researchers have.

MRI machines, lung transplants, and medications that help control asthma, cystic fibrosis, and COPD are all medical advances that are easy to take for granted. These advances have been made possible because of medical research. As a result, we will live longer and healthier lives than family members from past generations. As doctors and research scientists work to develop new medicines and find cures for these diseases and many others - we need to continue, as well as expand medical research.

The most important part of medical research is the men and women willing to participate in clinical studies. By enrolling in a research study, participants may help themselves ... as well as provide the opportunity to evaluate health risks, test new approaches to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of a disease, and improve the quality of healthcare available to everyone.

The knowledge gained with the help of the men and women who participate in research can expand far beyond the walls of a doctor’s office, or the bedside of a sick patient. Our society benefits too. Research can have a positive impact on the economy by leading to reduced health costs, new jobs based on the production and distribution of new medical equipment or drugs, and trade between countries for these items. Medical research has also provided information that lead to the funding of a variety of social programs, national health policies, and federal regulations.

We appreciate and respect those who choose to volunteer for medical research. By helping doctors and research scientists answer important medical questions, research volunteers give something very special to others!
Many people who have asthma will tell you that the winter months can be especially hard. The cold air and popular winter activities can irritate the airways in the lungs, causing asthma symptoms (or attacks) to occur more often or become worse.

But as pulmonary specialist, Dr. Mark Dransfield explains, “when a person truly understands their asthma, uses today’s medicines as directed, and follows strategies to decrease lung irritation - they can enjoy a wide variety of activities”.

One simple strategy a person with asthma can use during cold days, when they are outdoors, is to keep a scarf wrapped up around the nose and mouth. This will warm the air entering the lungs and help avoid lung irritation caused by cold temperatures.

Also, while a fireplace can keep you toasty warm, the smoke from a fire can be especially irritating to a person with asthma. Before lighting a fire, be sure to open the fireplace flue. You will also want to make sure there is good airflow around the fireplace; if possible open a window slightly. Finally, the smoke from a fire is not the only thing that can trigger asthma symptoms or attacks, the ash can cause problems too. Clean the fireplace after each use. For some people with asthma, fireplace smoke and ash will cause problems even if these strategies are used. If this is the case, indoor fires should be avoided!

For more information on simple strategies to avoid triggering asthma symptoms or attacks, visit the Environmental Protection Agency’s Website at: www.noattacks.org/triggers.html

Helping Researchers Find the Answers ... But First Get Some Answers Yourself!

Choosing to take part in a medical research study is a decision only you can make with the help of family, friends, health care professionals, and others you trust and respect. And while participating in a research study may not lead to a scientific break through, each study provides the stepping stones.

Before finalizing your decision to participate in a study, be sure you know the answers to the following questions:

- What are the major goals of the study?
- What will be required of me, what is my role?
- What are the possible side effects, how likely are they to occur, and what will be done to minimize them?
- Is the study likely to benefit me directly?
- What are the potential benefits to others?
- How long is my participation required?
- What discomforts, inconveniences and costs are involved?
- Do I want to participate in this study?

Calling All Asthma Agents!

The UAB School Asthma Program is ready to roll out into the Birmingham Area Schools. This program teaches children, between the ages of 6 to 12, to monitor and respond to their asthma symptoms. Developed with assistance from both Midfield and Tarrant Elementary Schools, children in the program receive a 30 minute educational program and then log onto a computer program each day at school to record any asthma symptoms and their peak flow rates. Children in the program receive asthma medication for 2 years at no charge. If you are interested in this program please call 934-0363!
What Everyone Should Know About COPD and Oxygen Therapy

Often, when a doctor tells a patient with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) that they will need to start oxygen therapy, the patient and their loved ones become nervous. A large number of patients are concerned that their bodies will become dependent on the oxygen and that the quality of their lives will be reduced. As a result many patients do not use the oxygen at all, or try to use their oxygen as little as possible.

The main reason doctors prescribe oxygen therapy is because a person’s lungs have weakened further from COPD. As a result, the lungs are not able to move enough oxygen from the air into the blood. When this happens, the level of oxygen in the blood drops and a person may have problems with dizziness, confusion, or headaches. Other individuals will complain of trouble with their breathing or suffer from low energy levels. If blood oxygen levels stay low over time, the person’s heart is stressed.

Oxygen therapy increases the concentration or level of oxygen a person breathes in. This allows the lungs to increase the level of oxygen transferred to the blood, and brings the blood oxygen levels back up to a normal amount.

When COPD patients begin to use the oxygen as their doctor ordered, they are usually very happy with the results. As Patricia Gullion explains, “the oxygen allows me to be mobile again. I don’t have to worry about walking somewhere. When I started to go to the Center, I would walk from my car to the seat inside the door and sit to catch my breath. Then I would cross the hall and collapse to catch my breath. Then I would get inside. Now, with my oxygen, I can walk all the way into the center without stopping....... Use it, do not be afraid -do not think you are giving up your independence by using oxygen”.

UAB Pulmonologist, Dr. Philip O’Reilly agrees. “Oxygen therapy improves the physical health of patients with COPD and helps them to live longer by benefiting the heart and lungs. By increasing their ability to move about and get exercise, oxygen therapy allows COPD patients to engage in activities they couldn’t do before, so their quality of life and spiritual health improves too.”

Ambulatory Oxygen Study
Sponsored by the NIH COPD Clinical Research Network, the Ambulatory Oxygen Study will compare patients’ use of 2 types of portable oxygen tanks and patients’ levels of physical activity.

This study is due to start in mid-January 2005. If you (1) are between the ages of 55 and 85, (2) have been using oxygen therapy for 6 months or more, (3) are able to walk, and (4) have not had to see a doctor due to an emergency in the past 4 weeks and are interested in learning more about this study please call Sherry at 996-6602.

Current Study Officers: Sherry Howard 996-6602

The ACE Study
Currently underway, the ACE Study is looking at how well Advair and Servent help people with COPD avoid flare-ups of their COPD. COPD patients over the age of 40, who have smoked in the past or are currently smoking, and have needed to go into the hospital or receive antibiotics or oral steroids in the past year to treat a COPD flare-up are invited to call Heather at 934-9240 to learn more about this study.

Participants in all UAB Lung Health Studies Will Receive Compensation for Their Time
Currently underway, the Trial of Asthma Patient Education (TAPE) is looking at the impact different approaches to patient education can have for people with asthma.

All persons who join this study are taught the proper use of a peak flow meter and inhalers, and receive an asthma action plan.

Most of the people who have joined this study find they do benefit from the educational information, even if they have been diagnosed with asthma for a long time!

If you are interested in receiving more information related to the TAPE Study call Ann at 975-6348.

Have You Heard?
Some of Our Research Projects Have Moved ...

The next time you come for a research study visit ... You may be coming to a new location!

At the beginning of October, the Lung Health Center’s Research Labs moved from the 2nd floor of the Boshell Building and the basement of the Hospital’s Hillman Building to the corner of 6th Avenue South and 20th Street.

Newly renovated, this large, bright space was at one time the medical school bookstore. Now it has been transformed and contains staff offices, examination and interview rooms, a waiting room, and laboratory space!

Directly behind our new space is parking deck 4. As you may know, the entrance for this deck is located between 19th and 20th Street on 6th Avenue South.

We encourage study participants, who will come see us at this new location, to park in this deck & take the elevators located in the center of the parking deck down to the ground floor. As you come off the elevators walk to the left between the new faculty tower and credit union. When you reach the street turn right. The Lung Health Center will be on your right. If you use the elevators on the south side of the deck, go to the ground floor and walk back across the street to the research center.

You can’t miss us .... The windows at the front and side of this new space have large signs with the words “Lung Health Center”. We look forward to showing you around!

Need to check whether the study you participate in has moved? Call us at 934-5555

For the Well-being of Your Lungs

The UAB Lung Health Center

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