

Performance assessment of asthma and COPD healthcare

Adherence to National Guidelines
2018



Performance assessment of asthma and COPD healthcare

Health care needs to become better at detecting patients with asthma and COPD and always offer smoking cessation interventions. This is the conclusion of the National Board of Health and Welfare's performance assessment of asthma and COPD healthcare.

What is asthma and COPD?

Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are two major prevalent diseases that the healthcare service can influence through medical interventions, early detection and treatment.

There are approximately 800,000 people in Sweden with asthma and 400,000–700,000 people with COPD. About 3,000 people die every year from COPD and the mortality rate is increasing, especially among women.

What does the performance assessment show?

The National Board of Health and Welfare's performance assessment of asthma and COPD healthcare provide insight into whether county councils work in the manner recommended in the National Board of Health and Welfare's 2015 national guidelines for asthma and COPD.

The performance assessment shows that some of the recommendations in the guidelines have had an impact on asthma och COPD healthcare, for example increased clinical use of the structured ACT (Asthma Control Test) and CAT (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease Assessment Test) assessment tests.

However, there are areas that need improvement in order for patients to receive quality health care.

More people need to be diagnosed

There is currently an underdiagnosis of both asthma and COPD. This means that many people do not receive efficient treatment, which results in poorer health.

The health service should offer dynamic spirometry to patients. Thorough diagnostics should also include an evaluation of the severity of the disease, in order to give the right treatment to the right person.

Measurement of lung function with spirometry is a prerequisite for diagnosis and for continued proper care.

There are great differences between the various county councils.

More people need to be offered smoking cessation interventions

Smoking is the main cause of COPD in Sweden. Quitting smoking is therefore the most important step for people with COPD. Smoking cessation is the only way to slow the development of the disease and reduce lung function impairment over time. For smokers with asthma, smoking cessation reduces asthma symptoms. The performance assessment shows that the degree of smoking cessation support offered to patients varies between healthcare providers.

More people should receive patient education

In people with asthma and COPD, patient education, in combination with support for self-care, reduces the risk of hospital admissions, emergency visits and sick leave. This also leads to an improved quality of life and increased ability for activities in daily life. Patient education should include information about the disease, current medical treatment, including inhalation techniques, proper self-care and information on various risk factors.

Many hospital clinics and community health centers offer structured education for patients, although there are large variations between county councils.

Medical treatment for asthma and COPD

Drugs for obstructive pulmonary disease are an important part of the treatment of asthma and COPD. The performance assessment shows how common medical treatment is, how often

different types of drugs are used, and geographical differences across the country.

More areas are in need of improvement

There are more areas where the county councils and, where relevant, municipalities need to improve on:

- offering allergy investigation for children and young people with suspected asthma
- offering written treatment plans for the patients
- offering follow-up and revisits to patients
- offering further training to staff and having access to asthma and COPD nurses
- collaborating in order to obtain a common view of the process for quality asthma and COPD health care.

What are national guidelines and performance assessments?

National guidelines and performance assessments consist of recommendations, indicators, target levels and performance assessments. The recommendations concern diagnosis and investigation, drug-related treatment, nursing and rehabilitation, as well as symptom assessment and follow-up. They are primarily addressed to decision-makers and management officials, but may also be of benefit to professionals, patient associations and the media.

In 2017, the National Board of Health and Welfare conducted a review of the recommendations. The aim is to ensure that these are up-to-date and based on the best available knowledge.

Visit our website for more information

The performance assessments, indicators, targets levels and guideline recommendations for asthma and COPD health care are available (in Swedish) on the National Board of Health and Welfare's website, www.socialstyrelsen.se.