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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Asthma camp referrals – letter to the editor

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Asthma camps offer a safe and controlled atmosphere for children to learn about their asthma, medications and how best to manage their disease while living full and active lives. According to the Consortium on Children's Asthma Camps (CCAC), there are 67 asthma camps in the USA (22 day camps and 42 overnight camps) [1]. Children at Camp Easy Breathers are traditionally referred by their asthma specialist, disease managers or school nurse. In the past five years, only 5% of our campers were referred by their primary physician.

Hurley Medical Center's research staff looked at the camps listed on CCAC's website and found that the average age for campers is 6–13 and the majority of camps lasted for 3–4 days. The average cost per child was \$86 (most offered scholarships). We have offered a day camp for 14 years, and in 2014 we offered our first overnight camp at a local YMCA campground and received grants for 35 children to attend at little or no cost. Camp Easy Breathers is staffed by volunteer physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists and health educators. The children were observed for breathing issues and, when required, we worked together quickly to help the child regain asthma control and return to camp activities. While all camps differ in the activities they offer, this camp offered swimming, canoeing, hiking, archery, fishing, and arts and crafts. Not only did the children report a fun experience throughout the week, but also they learned about their asthma, medications, warning signs and when to seek help. Our post-camp survey

showed that 94% felt they had the ability to control their asthma, and 91% said they could not wait to come back next year! Several of our children said that they loved camp because it made them feel “normal”.

We wanted to write this letter to encourage primary care physicians to look into asthma camp offerings in their state (many can be found at <http://www.asthmacamps.org/>) and postcamp flyers to let asthmatic patients know about these wonderful and safe opportunities. Parents are often hesitant to send their children with asthma away to camp; but with the encouragement of their physician we believe that more parents will feel comfortable about letting their children experience the joys of asthma camp.

Declaration of interest

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Reference

1. The Consortium on Children's Asthma Camps. Find a camp. 2014. Available from: <http://www.asthmacamps.org/findacamp.cfm> [last accessed 14 Dec 2014].