AAIR Charity
ASTHMA, ALLERGY & INFLAMMATION RESEARCH

Research Award:
Reducing Asthma Exacerbations by Using Short-Acting Beta Agonist Prescription Alerts to Target High Risk Children: Feasibility Work

Awarded to: Anna Selby Amount: £1,380 (May 2022 – Jan 2024)

Lay summary

Two types of inhalers are used to treat asthma: relievers and preventers. Overuse of relievers is associated with a higher risk of asthma attacks. Children prescribed 7 or more in one year are 4-5 times more likely to have a severe asthma attack than children prescribed none. This work was undertaken to inform the design of a study aimed at addressing reliever inhaler overuse in children with asthma. It involved:

1. A survey was sent to general practices across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. 76% of responders reported having electronic alert systems to identify patients being prescribed high numbers of reliever inhalers. However, the nature of these systems varied considerably between practices.

2. Three practices provided data on how many reliever inhalers children with asthma had been prescribed in the past year. On average, 7.6% of children had been prescribed 7 or more reliever inhalers.

3. Interviews were undertaken with health professionals to understand more about asthma reviews in general practice and existing systems for identifying patients at high risk of asthma attacks. They were also asked their views on our proposed study to address reliever inhaler overuse in children.

The findings of this work have been used to develop the protocol for the Prescription Alerts for Reliever inhalers in Children (PARC) project, which is being funded by the National Institute for Health and Research (NIHR). The aim of this is to determine whether targeted, enhanced asthma reviews in children prescribed 7 more reliever inhalers in a year can prevent severe asthma attacks.