Greetings! We hope this holiday newsletter finds you well. It’s been a busy and successful year here at the Asthma Institute. We wanted to share some of our news with you and send you our wishes for a happy and healthy holiday!

Our most noticeable update is our new name. In the past, you have known us as the Asthma & Allergic Diseases Clinical Research Center. We are now the University of Pittsburgh Asthma Institute at UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine - but you can call us the Asthma Institute!

We continue to specialize in severe asthma and allergic immune disorders. We strive to improve the lives of individual asthma patients through the best available clinical approaches and ongoing research.

Happy holidays from our family to yours!

2009 H1N1 Vaccine Study

One of this year’s major accomplishments is the implementation of the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine trial. The Asthma Institute was one of five sites chosen nationally to participate in this National Institutes of Health study on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine in asthmatics and severe asthmatics. The 2009 H1N1 virus was first detected in the U.S. in April 2009. Within two months the World Health Organization stated that a pandemic was occurring.

According to the CDC, “the symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.” Asthmatics are among those considered to have a higher risk of complications from H1N1 influenza.

Over 70 asthmatics in our area participated in 350 total visits and we are happy to report that everyone is doing well. Even if you did not participate in the trial, we encourage all of you to get vaccinated as soon as possible. And don’t forget the regular seasonal shot, too!

In addition to influenza vaccines - both H1N1 and regular influenza - other ways to stay healthy this winter include frequently washing your hands and avoiding people who are ill or coughing. Patients with asthma should continue to take their controller medicines and inhalers regularly. Asthma patients should also eat healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables as well as continue to get some exercise, avoiding extremely cold air.

~Dr. Wenzel and the Asthma Institute Staff
The Asthma Institute is one of only nine sites across the country chosen to participate in “AsthmaNet,” the group of adult and pediatric centers chosen by the NHLBI to receive money in order to study the latest asthma medications.

Also, as part of the economic stimulus, the Asthma Institute will participate in a Grand Opportunity (GO) grant to identify chemicals in the lungs of asthmatics which associate with their disease and may be driven by genetic/hereditary factors. The study will be part of the ongoing Severe Asthma Respiratory Program. This grant money will help us bring the most innovative and promising clinical trials to Pittsburgh, giving our patients and the Pittsburgh asthma community access to the best treatment available while at the same time helping us advance our understanding of asthma.

Asthma Institute Website

In progress is a new Asthma Institute website that will help us to communicate with you more effectively. The site will provide general information on the Asthma Institute & staff, asthma and other allergic immune disorders, current research and ongoing clinical studies. The site will also feature an easy-to-use contact form and forum for your questions.

We plan to launch the new website in January 2010 and hope that the new website will prove to be a useful and informative resource for our patients & colleagues.

Upcoming Studies

We have several new studies beginning in 2010. For information regarding these or current studies, please contact us with the information provided to the left. You may also visit: http://www.clinicalresearch.pitt.edu/

Select “Pulmonary/Respiratory” from the drop-down menu.