

Question on Notice
No. 805
Asked on 24 May 2007

MR FOLEY asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to constituents that have approached me regarding asthma patients (in particular for children) who must see a specialist before they can access a nebulizer machine through Community Health Care and, as asthma is very common throughout Australia and specialists are not—

Will he rectify this situation so that suffering patients are only required to see their regular general practitioner before they can be issued with a nebulizer machine through the public system?

ANSWER:

The District Manager of the Fraser Coast Health Service District (FCHSD) in consultation with the Director of Paediatrics has advised that generally for asthma treatment, the Paediatricians at the FCHSD don't use nebulizers except in extreme circumstances. The use of 'Spacers' provides a more effective treatment than the nebulizer. General Practitioners can also recommend the use of 'Spacers' which are available at local pharmacies.

In the interest of best practice and patient care, a specialist's recommendation is required for the use of nebulizers. Patients are encouraged to develop an Asthma Action Plan in conjunction with their General Practitioner.

The use of a nebulizer machine is not considered to be the first line of management in an Asthma Action Plan. Evidence supports the use of other inhalation devices such as 'Spacers'.

Involving a specialist ensures that optimal investigation, differential diagnosis and recommendations occur, supported by the ongoing care of the general practitioner.