

SUMMARY OF ASTHMA FORUM

EVENT OVERVIEW

On Saturday December 2, 2017 – The State Innovation Model Consumer Advisory Board (SIM CAB), in partnership with the North Central Regional Mental Health Board (NCRMHB) and Middlesex Community College, organized an asthma forum. The forum offered opportunities for participants to share their experiences with asthma, to learn from each other, and to identify healthcare resources in the community. Dr. Srinivasan, an allergist, and Rose-Ann Wanczyck, LCSW attended and played an active role in sharing resources and helping people identify how to best address their concerns with asthma. SIM CAB member Steve Karp shared his personal struggles with asthma and led a lively discussion about people’s individual experiences with the chronic illness. The event occurred at Middlesex Community College in Middletown, CT.



The asthma forum engaged 10 participants. Attendees ranged from a college student to a doctor who practices functional medicine. Members of the SIM CAB also participated in the conversations. The event kicked off with registration and snacks. The event organizer Steve Karp discussed his personal struggles with asthma. A woman shared her personal experiences with asthma and her stories working with youth at a school-based health center to address their asthma. The group then discussed the social determinants of health and how they affect certain communities more than others. For example, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) can affect young people’s prognosis for asthma.

Environmental triggers were also discussed. Allergens in the air and in water spurred people’s asthma attacks. Avoiding chlorine in water while showering was helpful for one person. Overusing the ER to address asthma attacks was a systemic issue that was debated. One advocate shared that problems with patient-physician communication is the biggest cost driver of healthcare and with addressing asthma effectively. Another discussed how addressing the root causes of asthma via functional medicine rather than through traditional pharmaceuticals could help address problems. Since Connecticut has the oldest housing stock in the country, the group discussed how air filtration systems in buildings could impact asthma.

Allergist Dr. Srinivasan discussed different types of asthma and different ways that his office treats the chronic condition. Dr. Srinivasan spoke about how asthma is impacted by longer seasons. In the past, people primarily sought treatment in April to June and September to October. Now, a constant flow of people seek asthma help from his office regardless of the season. Dr. Srinivasan also discussed non-medical ways to manage asthma, including improving living environments with air filters and regular dusting and cleaning to prevent mold. He also recommended regular exercise, healthy eating, and adequate rest and sleep. He agreed we need to educate people about problems with overtreatment in medical care, and educate doctors about disparities in terms of healthcare access. The asthma forum wrapped up with a breathing exercise and mindfulness to remind the group about holistic ways to address asthma.