

HARTFORD—ASP—AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ALLERGY, ASTHMA,  
AND IMMUNOLOGY—AMERICAN COLLEGE OF ALLERGY, ASTHMA, AND  
IMMUNOLOGY—GDI AWARD



*Award Recipient:*

CAROL A. SALTOUN, MD  
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY FEINBERG SCHOOL  
OF MEDICINE

PROJECT:

IMPROVING ASTHMA CARE FOR LOW-INCOME ELDERLY

MENTORSHIP TEAM:

LESLIE GRAMMER, MD

JAMES WEBSTER, MD

PAUL YARNOLD, PhD

Numerous studies have reported that reversible airway obstruction, particularly asthma, is under-diagnosed and under-treated in the elderly population. The problem increases for those elderly individuals living in poverty and with poor access to medical care. Any intervention for this elderly population with reversible airway disease should be multifaceted, reasonably priced, and cost-effective.

This study design aims to improve asthma care for elderly, low income, asthmatic individuals. The hypothesis is that health care utilization can be reduced and quality of life can be improved in elderly, disadvantaged patients with asthma by allowing them to participate in a community-based outreach program of evaluation and education so that they can work with their health care providers to take advantage of all the recent improvements in therapy for asthma. Primary outcome measurements used will be quality of life scores and subject utilization of emergency health care resources. Secondary outcome measures used will be changes pre- and post-intervention in FEV<sub>1</sub>, asthma “rescue” medication use, asthma symptoms, whether medication use is in accord with National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute guidelines, whether the patients have an “emergency plan,” and changes in health care costs for asthma. Appropriate participants have been identified in a survey study based on individuals who attend senior centers in Chicago, IL, or live in housing

subsidized by the Chicago Housing Authority. These individuals will be skin tested for relevant aeroallergens; have spirometry pre- and post-bronchodilation; and be given quality of life health care information and a utilization instrument initially and at two later points after the initiation of the intervention. The intervention consists of a booklet, *One Minute Asthma* by T.F. Plaut, MD, a PowerPoint presentation that is a synopsis of the first 14 pages of the booklet, and individual counseling. Eventually, peer educators will be identified and trained to reduce the cost of the intervention. A successful cost-effective intervention that reduces morbidity among low-income, elderly individuals will be a significant health benefit to each of them. In addition, it will likely reduce Medicare costs for these individuals and ultimately for society as a whole.

In addition to allowing me to focus my research on asthma and allergic diseases in the elderly population, this career development award has enabled me to enter the Masters in Clinical Investigation Program in the Northwestern University Graduate School. This program gives young faculty members more formal training in biostatistics, epidemiology, and research methods. The combination of obtaining the T. Franklin Williams Scholars Award and completing this masters program should allow me to develop new research designs and obtain funding as an independent investigator.