



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System
(Omaha-Lincoln-Grand Island)

News Release

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Will Ackerman -- Public Affairs Officer
Office: (402) 995-4719
Cell: (402) 332-6780
William.Ackerman@va.gov

Omaha Division (00P)
4101 Woolworth Avenue
Omaha, NE 68105

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 21, 2008

Low-intensity Case-Management Significantly Improves COPD Outcomes According to Landmark Research Study

OMAHA, Neb. — Low-intensity case management can reduce emergency room visits by more than half and hospital stays by one-third for patients at high risk of hospitalization due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), according to a landmark study.

The findings were reported May 21 at the American Thoracic Society's 2008 International Conference in Toronto.

"Even we were surprised by the magnitude of our results. In the past, most studies have shown very little benefit from limited intervention. However, those studies were not as rigorous and did not include as many patients," said Naresh A. Dewan, M.D., study co-principal investigator. Dewan, a Creighton University professor of medicine, is chief of the pulmonary section at Omaha Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center.

"Due to the low cost and relative ease of our model, we believe it could and should be used in a variety of patient settings to improve patient outcomes and help control health care costs," Dewan noted.

For the randomized, year-long study, researchers enrolled 743, mostly male, patients at five VA hospitals, including about 200 patients at the Omaha facility. To qualify for the study, participants had to meet certain criteria showing them to be at high risk of COPD exacerbations and hospital admissions.

About half of the patients received limited case management, and the others obtained conventional care from their primary-care providers for 12 months.

Those with limited case management received a one-hour educational and clinical assessment session, adjustment of respiratory medications according to recommended guidelines, a written action plan, refillable antibiotics and steroid prescriptions, and a monthly telephone call from a case manager. The manager, a respiratory therapist, was also available for phone consultations as needed.

Over the course of the year, case-managed patients reduced their emergency room visits for COPD by more than one-half and hospitalizations by nearly one-third, compared to those who received conventional care. Hospital admissions for any cause decreased by more than 20 percent in the case-managed group.

“Our case-management model also showed an improved quality of life for patients, Dewan said. “While we also found a nonstatistically significant drop in the number of deaths, a larger study is needed to determine whether this model can decrease COPD-related mortality.”

COPD is the fourth-leading cause of mortality in the United States, annually accounting for about 110,000 deaths, 750,000 hospitalizations and 16 million office or emergency room visits, Dewan noted. He estimated that between 90-95 percent of COPD cases involve current or former smokers.

###

For more information about the VA study or to schedule an interview with Dr. Dewan, call Will Ackerman at (402) 995-4719. For more information about Creighton University’s research partnership with the Omaha VA Medical Center, contact Kathryn Clark at (402) 280-2864.

#

About VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System: The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System proudly serves more than 172,500 veterans in Nebraska, western Iowa and portions of Kansas and Missouri. Omaha’s medical center is an inpatient facility and also a large outpatient clinic for primary and specialty care. The nursing home care unit is in Grand Island. There are community-based outpatient clinics in Lincoln, Grand Island, North Platte and Norfolk. Future plans are for CBOCs to be opened in Holdrege and Bellevue, Neb., and Shenandoah, Iowa. www.nebraska.va.gov.

About Creighton University: Creighton University, a comprehensive Jesuit, Catholic institution located in Omaha, Neb., has embarked on the most ambitious fundraising campaign in the school’s history with a goal of raising \$350 million. The Willing to Lead campaign reflects Creighton’s commitment to prepare and inspire tomorrow’s leaders. The freshman class profile consistently ranks in the top five among Midwestern universities of our size and the top 10 Catholic universities nationwide. We enroll more than 4,000 undergraduate and 2,900 professional school and graduate students in its College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business Administration, Graduate School, and Schools of Dentistry, Law, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy and Health Professions. For more information visit our website at: www.creighton.edu