

Unnecessary inhaler re-supply has environmental, staff workload, waste & financial implications

Where is the inhaler?

01 Background & aim

Inhaler devices for asthma & COPD treatment have environmental impacts due to their manufacture, the hydrocarbon propellants some contain, & their disposal as pharmaceutical waste. Replacing misplaced inhalers has environmental & other impacts. This study aimed to explore the extent asthma/COPD inhalers dispensed to inpatients are re-supplied.



Method 02

Asthma/COPD inhalers dispensed to inpatients (including discharge) in 2023 were identified from the Pharmacy dispensing system. Supply of more than one of the same inhaler per patient per month was determined. The cost & carbon footprint of the additional supplies were calculated.

03 Result & discussion

345 (9%) of 3957 inhalers dispensed were supplied to the same inpatient more than once within the same month. The cost of these additional inhalers is ~\$12K, & the carbon footprint up to 9700kg CO₂e. If the 9% rate is applied to all inpatient inhalers supplied (n=11,512, including via ward imprest), re-supply costs are an additional ~\$18K, associated with up to 28,200kg CO₂e (~13 laps around Australia in a light SUV).

Re-supply of inhalers has substantial environmental, workload, waste & financial implications. Plans are underway to raise awareness & implement strategies to minimise unnecessary re-supply of inhalers.



Learn more on our Pulse page!

