UCLA Breathmobile: Asthma Clinic on Wheels: Keeping kids in School and Out of the Emergency Room

Los Angeles and Long Beach, United States

Year Founded: 2009
Organization type: government
Project Stage: Established
Budget: $100,000 - $250,000

- At risk youth
- Health care

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

The Breathmobile, a model outreach program, is a specialty-based asthma clinic "on wheels" serving public schools in high risk, urban communities where barriers to specialty asthma care exist. Missed school days and missed work days due to asthma are minimized by treating children at the school-site.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if children like 10 y.o. Ethan with asthma could attend school regularly, did not have to frequent the E.R., and could play sports?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The striking increase in the prevalence of pediatric asthma of the last two decades is due in part to the changes in the environment in which children grow and play brought about by the industrialization of urban areas. Air pollution, in particular, has been linked with worsening asthma in this vulnerable population. Proximity to heavy traffic, for instance, is associated to not only asthma severity but also to poor asthma control in children.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

While improving the quality of the air that children breathe every day is key to reversing the negative trend of asthma outcomes, interventions that focus on early diagnosis and high quality care for children with asthma are essential to minimizing the damages caused by the inescapable environmental factors that surround them. Such interventions should be available to all children, irrespective of ability to pay, minimizing negative impacts that air pollution has on respiratory health.
Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

When 10 y.o. Ethan, with severe persistent asthma, first visited the breathmobile, he was unable to sleep through the night, waking frequently with coughing and wheezing. He attended the E.R regularly for care, he was unable to attend school regularly, unable to participate in sports and other childhood activities due to his poorly controlled Asthma. His mother, a single mother who had been laid off from her job, could not pay for the expensive asthma treatment that he required. Since receiving regular asthma care at his school on the breathmobile, Ethan has not visited the E.R., he is an avid Rugby player in High School, sleeps through the night and is rarely reminded that he even has asthma. There are so many more like Ethan.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

Since starting operation, the UCLA Breathmobile unit has evaluated close to 1500 children with asthma across almost 900 visits. At follow-up 95% of those children reported no ED visits or hospitalization. More importantly, optimizing asthma care in this highly vulnerable population has resulted in an 80% reduction in school absenteeism due for asthma related causes.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

Asthma is a serious but highly treatable disease which disproportionately affects minority and underserved children. With increased funding and support the Breathmobile could expand to deliver services to an extended number of high risk communities in Los Angeles.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution’s plan to ensure financial sustainability?

Untreated asthma in children leads to absenteeism and underperformance in schoolchildren, a handicap that can have lifelong financial consequences for the nation. Further, recent studies clearly show significant asthma-related direct medical costs savings (ED visits, hospitalizations) in at risk children treated in the Breathmobile. We will continue to work with insurers and community leaders to ensure the support and expansion of the Program.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

There are currently no other programs in the community like the breathmobile that deliver specialized asthma and allergy care to vulnerable children at their school site.

Team

Our team consists of Drs. Maria Garcia Lloret and Erina Lin, board certified allergists from UCLA, Registered Nurse, Stacey Skura Zedeck and Driver and clinic assistant, James Anderson. Our Allergists are responsible for evaluating and treating patients seen on the breathmobile. Our Registered Nurse is responsible for asthma education including medication use and scheduling follow-up with patients for continued asthma and allergy care.

About You

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About Your Project

Organization Name
How long has your organization been operating?

Organization Country
Country where this project is creating social impact
What awards or honors has the project received?

Funding: How is your project financial supported?

Foundations, NGOs.

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**Describe your partnership.**

The Department of Pediatrics, Division of Allergy, Immunology and Rheumatology at UCLA- Drs Garcia Lloret, and Erina Lin, Registered Nurse Stacey Skura Zeckock and Driver and Clinic Assistant, James Anderson have partnered with the Long Beach Unified School District and the Los Angeles Unified School District to deliver asthma and allergy treatment and education for free to children at their schools. Since we began providing services five years ago, we have treated approximately 1500 children for asthma and allergies. Additionally we have attended many health fairs promoting asthma and allergy awareness, treatment and education. We have given many talks to school nurses and administrators, to student interns at the South Coast Air Quality Management Division as well as the general public including parents and their children at the Public Libraries. We have developed strong ties and close relationships with the nurses, the administrators and the families in the Long Beach community and with KIPP:LA, a non-profit organization that operates free public charter schools in under-resourced communities in South and East Los Angeles.

**How does your project enhance community engagement for UCLA Health and/or the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA?**

Our team believes that all families, irrespective of their zip code and their demographics, deserve the level of care that UCLA Health is renowned for. Success in this mission strongly depends on our ability to engage the community in our efforts. The Breathmobile at UCLA engages the community in Los Angeles and Long Beach in a variety of ways. Three days per week, every week for the past five years, the mobile asthma clinic has provided education and state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment for asthma and allergies to children and their families at their school sites. We strive to engage the parents, teachers, administrators and the staff at the schools. We have had an extraordinarily positive response from the community. Participation in the program has increased exponentially in the last few years. Our outcomes show that children who attend the Breathmobile have a 76% reduction in hospitalizations, 62% reductions in emergency department visits, and a 75% reduction in missed school days from asthma. Children also do better in school and can participate in sports and other activities at the school and are not limited by their asthma. Teachers and school nurses have recognized the impact we have had on the students who have visited the breathmobile and we have gained a tremendous amount of respect and support from the Long Beach School Community. They have come to trust us and rely on us to help their students achieve their very best.

By attending community events such as health fairs, back to school readiness fairs, and health screening events, we have raised asthma awareness, promoted the services offered at UCLA and provided treatment and education to thousands of families in our community. In addition, the UCLA Breathmobile provides an unparalleled educational experience for medical students, residents and fellows. The clinic has become one of the most popular rotations for Pediatric and Med-Peds residents. We host an average of 2 trainees per 2 week rotation and our available spots fill up quickly at the beginning of each academic year. Students not only learn the ropes of asthma and allergy management but also the unique quality of patient care that only this type of setting can provide. Feedback has been uniformly positive and many of them choose to come more than once throughout their training.

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