

# Asthma in Adults

## Introduction

The National Review of Asthma Deaths (NRAD)<sup>1</sup> has given the following definition of asthma, reminding clinicians that asthma is a common chronic condition, which can prove fatal for a few of our patients:

*“Asthma is a common, multi-factorial and often chronic (long-term) respiratory illness that can result in episodic or persistent symptoms and in episodes of suddenly worsening wheezing (asthma attacks or exacerbations) that can prove fatal.”<sup>1</sup>*

The UK has some of the highest rates of asthma in Europe and on average in Scotland one person dies every three days from asthma.<sup>2</sup> Making a diagnosis of asthma is not always straightforward in clinical practice. Experienced clinicians will be aware of this, and the aim of this module is to give guidance on diagnosis, and of management of asthma.

This module will cover:

- diagnosis of asthma – differential diagnoses and diagnostic tools
- drug and device choices
- maintenance and reliever therapy (MART)
- management of asthma exacerbations and when to prescribe antibiotics
- long term review and personal asthma action plans (PAAP)
- occupational asthma
- high risk patients

Abbreviations of commonly used inhaler types are included in the box below. In keeping with the recommended use of proprietary names for inhalers we have used these names in the information provided in cases. No recommendation for any specific inhaler brand or manufacturer is meant by this.

SABA = Short acting  $\beta$ 2 agonist, LABA = Long acting  $\beta$ 2 agonist, ICS = Inhaled corticosteroid

If groups find they cannot complete all four cases in this module, they should note that occupational asthma (case 4) is included in the PBSGL module on occupational medicine.