

Second Opinion

Your respiratory questions answered...

Question

I want to know more about FeNO and whether we should introduce it in our practice. Where can I find out more about it and how do I create a business case in support of its use?

Answer

FeNO is a test that measures eosinophilic inflammation in the airways. It is easy to perform and most people can carry out the manoeuvre from age 5 or 6 years. The test takes around two minutes with the result immediately available. FeNO can be used as a consideration for patients presenting for diagnosis of asthma and is particularly useful when the history makes diagnosis uncertain. It is also a useful tool in asthma management for patient education, opening dialogue about medication adherence, stepping down treatment and a consideration when symptoms are increasing. It is not a replacement for a good knowledge of asthma management and guidelines or clinical judgement.

Most departments will have a template to populate for a business case. There is little money within the NHS for investment in new services or even new technology. However, CCGs will, at times, offer funding for new initiatives that FeNO may fit into such as innovation funding, so it is worth being aware of what is available. An 'Invest to Save' case – showing the savings from getting the diagnosis right and not prescribing lifelong medications for those who do not have asthma – along with the improved quality for those who will benefit from better management, would make the most successful business case in the current economic climate.

Resources you may wish to refer to

- Slide Kit on FeNO presented by Carol Stonham at the PCRS National Conference 2018. <https://bit.ly/2Px3rfj>
- PCRS Wall Chart Guide to Respiratory Devices (<https://www.pcrs-uk.org/resource/guide-respiratory-devices>).
- Getting the basics right: FeNo (<https://www.pcrs-uk.org/resource/feno-testing>).
- PCRS response to the publication of the NICE guideline on the diagnosis and monitoring of asthma (https://www.pcrs-uk.org/sites/pcrs-uk.org/files/BriefingAsthmaGuidelines_V3.docx).
- NICE guide to the diagnosis of asthma (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG80>).