All topics in Respiratory guidelines, version 5 have been thoroughly reviewed and updated by the expert writing group.

An entirely new topic covers the approach to wheeze, cough and stridor occurring in children.

Children are not miniature adults; hence the management of asthma in children and asthma in adults and adolescents appears in separate topics. There are also separate sections for children in other respiratory topics such as sleep-disordered breathing, interstitial lung disease and domiciliary oxygen therapy.

The approach to management of asthma continues to evolve. There are new tables to guide the initial and ongoing assessment of the severity of acute asthma flare-ups. These inform the management of acute asthma, which is summarised in user-friendly figures and tables. Monitoring the patient during an acute asthma flare-up is important, as are the post-acute care and follow-up.

New advice for maintenance management of asthma is discussed, including considerations of drug and nondrug interventions. A stepwise approach to drug treatment for children, and for adults and adolescents is visually summarised in figures and expanded on in accompanying text.

Correct use of inhalational drug delivery devices is essential for good control of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). A new table summarises the specific advantages and precautions to consider when choosing a device, while a separate table lists the devices available for each fixed-dose combination or single-drug inhaler.

New recommendations allow patients with well-controlled asthma to scuba dive and are included in the topic fitness to scuba dive. Other topics give information for assessment of patients with respiratory disease for fitness to fly and fitness for surgery. Fitness for surgery also gives advice on whether a procedure needs to be postponed when a child has a head cold.
New emphasis is placed on conservative management rather than active intervention of primary spontaneous pneumothorax.

A completely new table lists common and/or important causes of cough and a new box lists alarm symptoms and findings in adults and children with cough. Differential diagnosis of cough is important to identify the underlying cause of a patient’s cough and guide management.

New recommendations for target oxygen saturation levels when giving oxygen follow the lead of The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ). Sections on acute and domiciliary oxygen therapy have been updated with information on indications for use, avoidance of potential harms and monitoring oxygen levels.

The use of noninvasive ventilation may help to avoid the need for invasive ventilation in some situations. This topic gives advice on management of problems such as treatment failure and adverse effects experienced by the patient, as well as on actual use of noninvasive ventilation.

A figure of stepwise management of stable COPD illustrates the maintenance management of COPD according to symptom severity. Management involves treatment of respiratory symptoms of COPD as well as consideration of comorbid conditions and complications. Therapy with inhaled bronchodilators and corticosteroids, including with fixed-dose combination inhalers, is discussed.

The difficulty of managing patients with overlap of asthma and COPD is explained.

Updated information is included on diagnosis and management of patients with less common respiratory diseases (such as cystic fibrosis and interstitial lung diseases) who are seen in primary care but whose diseases are usually managed by specialist respiratory physicians or specialist centres.

An updated figure summarises treatment of allergic rhinitis according to symptom severity and duration.

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