

Statement of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Re: Bronchial Thermoplasty

February 2018

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that causes airways to become inflamed, making it hard to breathe. Common symptoms include coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing and chest tightness. About 25 million Americans have asthma, including more than 18 million adults.

Many people with asthma manage it well, thanks to current treatments. Despite this, an estimated 5 to 10 percent of people with asthma have trouble managing it even on maximum therapy. People in this group have “severe asthma.”

Severe asthma can be a debilitating disease that interferes with daily tasks. A person with severe asthma may have symptoms every day, throughout the day. They may also have trouble sleeping most nights.

The annual combined health care cost of asthma is more than \$56 billion dollars. As U.S. asthma rates increase, so will the number of people with severe asthma, the costs for direct health care (hospitalizations and medication), and the costs for indirect health care (missed school and work days).

In 2017, AAFA surveyed 804 people with asthma. Of these 804 people, 185 were determined to have severe uncontrolled asthma. Some of our findings about these patients include:

- 88% of severe patients reported “some” or “extreme” limitations on everyday tasks;
- 41% of severe patients missed 10 or more work days (in the past 12 months), compared to 9% of the non-severe group;
- 60% of severe patients had visited an emergency department at least once in the past 12 months;
- 41% of severe patients felt their asthma was so severe that there are no medicines to make it better.

Bronchial thermoplasty (BT) is a drug free treatment option for people whose asthma symptoms are not improved by other medication. It helps people to better control their severe asthma and results in a decrease in the number and severity of asthma attacks. BT may improve a patient’s quality of life by reducing the physical limitations, number of missed work days, and visits to the emergency department—all of which can lead to improved social, financial and emotional well-being. BT offers hope to people who want may feel that there are no medicines to make their asthma better.

At the 2009 FDA Panel meeting to consider approval of BT, AAFA urged approval of BT by the FDA. Now, **AAFA urges that health plans and insurance carriers cover the costs of this procedure for those whose severe asthma is not well managed by less invasive therapies and whose physicians deem it appropriate.**

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Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America



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We strongly support access to affordable treatment options for people with severe asthma; as a potentially life-changing procedure for some people with asthma, we continue to support affordable access to BT.

As with all procedures, there are some health risks in using BT. We encourage people to speak with their healthcare provider to determine if BT is right for them.

About AAFA

Founded in 1953 and celebrating 65 years of service, AAFA is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA provides practical information and community-based services through its digital communities and national network of local chapters and educational support groups. Through its Kids With Food Allergies division, AAFA offers the most extensive online support community for families raising children with food allergies. AAFA also helps consumers identify products suitable for those with asthma and allergies through the asthma & allergy friendly® Certification Program. For more information, visit aafa.org.

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