

16 February 2004

MEDIA ALERT

Could it be asthma? You've got to blow to know! International Primary Care Respiratory Group and Susie Maroney OAM host free testing

Melbournians can blow hard on Friday afternoon (20 February) and have a free lung function test at the 'Spirometry Event' outside Collins Place, Collins Street.

A *spirometer*, the device used for testing, provides an accurate measure of lung function (how well your lungs work) and can assist in the diagnosis and monitoring of asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and other respiratory diseases.

Australian long-distance swimmer, Susie Maroney OAM, who has asthma, will officially open the Spirometry Event and be the first to take the test tagged: "You've got to blow to know".

Dr H John Fardy, Co-President of the International Primary Care Respiratory Group, said spirometry can assist in providing answers for people showing signs of asthma or COPD and also help track a person's progress.

"If a person is experiencing symptoms such as wheeze, chest tightness, shortness of breath and cough, it could be asthma. And one of the better ways of clarifying the situation to find out is through spirometry testing. Likewise, if a person already has asthma, spirometry can monitor asthma treatment and determine its level of success," Dr Fardy said. "And for COPD, it is an essential tool for diagnosis."

Doctors and asthma educators will conduct the free spirometry tests, with the results interpreted by doctors. People will be required to complete a consent form and will receive an information sheet along with their results. This will also include a referral form should they be advised to visit a doctor.

The spirometry testing is part of the International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG) Conference hosted by the National Asthma Council.

The IPCRG Conference is for primary care health professionals and covers all facets of respiratory medicine including asthma, respiratory allergy, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), tuberculosis, pneumonia, infectious diseases and cough. It runs from the 19-22 February at the Sofitel Hotel in Melbourne.

What: Spirometry Event and Susie Maroney OAM

Where: Collins Place, Collins Street, Melbourne

When: Friday 20 February from 12pm – 2pm

Media can contact Caroline James or Michelle Palmer at Porter Novelli on tel: (03) 9289 555 or email: cjames@porternovelli.com.au or mpalmer@porternovelli.com.au for further information.

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