SINCE THE advent of cancer death is the #1 cause IN THE FIGHT AGAINST LUNG DISEASE, efforts to manage and treat respiratory conditions care at home have shown promising results.

Nearly 20 asthma sufferers a day end up in Fresno County ERs. Fewer respiratory-related hospitalizations and hospitalizations were reduced 79% and hospitalizations were reduced 65%, saving an estimated $35 million is spent in Fresno County annually on hospital costs for those with asthma, according to the Central California Asthma Collaborative. During home visits, caregivers test inhaler and medication use and assess psychosocial needs. "We also test the ambient air in their homes to look for asthma triggers," such as pets, mold in a swamp cooler, or proximity to highways and dusty farm fields, said Dr. Vipal Joshi, associate professor at UCSF and medical director for the program. "It makes patients feel special that we came to their home. "It makes patients feel special that we came to their home."

Among the more than 400 patients in respiratory distress. Among the more than 400 patients in respiratory distress. The number of respiratory-related ER visits among patients having home visits as part of the Chronic Lung Disease Program was reduced 65%, saving an estimated $1.17 million a year on hospital care. An estimated $85 million is spent in Fresno County annually on hospital costs for those with asthma, according to the Central California Asthma Collaborative. During home visits, caregivers test inhaler and medication use and assess psychosocial needs. "We also test the ambient air in their homes to look for asthma triggers," such as pets, mold in a swamp cooler, or proximity to highways and dusty farm fields, said Dr. Vipal Joshi, associate professor at UCSF and medical director for the program. "It makes patients feel special that we came to their home."

A special kind of teamwork is helping to keep those with chronic lung problems out of the hospital – including visits by clinicians to patients’ homes.

No small task in Fresno County, where chronic lung disease is prevalent, and where 1 in 5 people has asthma. Exacerbated by air pollution levels that are among the highest in the country, emergency departments at Community Medical Centers’ hospitals and elsewhere see dozens of people daily in respiratory distress.

Lung cancer is the #1 cause of cancer death in California. About 12,600 Californians die of lung cancer each year, and about 2,100 new cases are diagnosed annually. The survival rate for those with a late stage, lung-cancer diagnosis is less than 2% over five years. When detected early, the prognosis is better.

Community’s Lung Nodule Clinic has been able to shorten the time between a patient’s initial referral and consultation with lung experts from nearly three months to seven days. Now 61.5% of patients are diagnosed at early stages of their lung cancers, compared with 42% when the program started. "Historically, patients in the San Joaquin Valley are diagnosed with lung cancer at a later stage and have worse outcomes," said Dr. Michael W. Petersen, a pathologist practicing at Community Regional Medical Center and vice-chair of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, Fresno medical education program. "We started the weekly multidisciplinary lung nodule clinic in 2009 to expedite the diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer in this population."

Gordon Carlson is now in remission from lung cancer after 18 chemo treatments and 33 radiation treatments, including Cyberknife. "Before the lung nodule program, getting treatment was like a traffic jam," he said. "I’m a NASCAR fan so being in the program is like being on a super highway. The treatment is so organized and coordinated."