As a former marathoner and college athlete, the thought of completing strenuous exercise like running 26.1 miles or pitching a baseball game while suffering from asthma is almost unthinkable. Having taken up yoga recently, I am keenly aware of the power and importance of deep breathing in a fitness routine.

It almost goes without saying that breathing is fundamental not only to athletes, but to all humans. Conditions that threaten our ability to perform one of the most basic functions of life can be scary and dangerous, if they are not understood. Disorders like asthma must be studied so that we can learn how to most effectively treat and cure.

The National Library of Medicine defines asthma as an inflammatory disorder of the airways that causes attacks of wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and coughing. The condition affects a startling number of Americans. Some sources report that as many as 34 million Americans—about one-third of whom are children—have been diagnosed with this incurable condition.

The AOA is proud to support initiatives to learn more about asthma and how osteopathic medicine can address and treat patients who live with this disorder. Osteopathic manipulative treatment can help patients with asthma. The AOA website, Osteopathic.org, contains an entry for asthma in our Health Conditions Library designed to give patients and the public more information on this condition. http://www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic-health/about-your-health/health-conditions-library/general-health/Pages/asthma.aspx.

This issue of The Whole Patient will add to the body of knowledge on asthma and, we hope, help some of those 34 million Americans who live with asthma breathe a little bit easier today.