



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **New Data Suggests Worldwide COPD Prevalence may be Triple Previous Estimates**

*1 in 10 Adults Over Age 40 May Have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*

COUNTRY, 17 November 2004. At least 10 percent of the world's population over 40 years of age may have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), according to new data (1). The new statistics, released today for World COPD Day suggest that the chronic lung disease is 3 times more common than previous estimates (2, 3, 4, 5).

COPD is a devastating lung disease that progressively robs a person of the ability to breathe. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that COPD kills more than 2.75 million people each year. Worldwide it ranks as the fourth leading cause of death, alongside HIV/AIDS (5).

“COPD is like an iceberg: The burden of disease that we know about represents just the tip of the problem,” says A. Sonia Buist, MD, Member of the Scientific Committee for the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD). “We are facing a dual challenge because not only is COPD rapidly increasing in prevalence, but also many people with COPD are unaware they have the disease.”

The new data on the prevalence of COPD are preliminary results from two major international studies carried out by the Burden of Obstructive Lung Disease (BOLD) Initiative (in China and Turkey) (1), and the group's Latin American counterpart, PLATINO (in Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay) (6).

The groups' initial findings, which were presented in abstract form at a scientific meeting of pulmonary physicians in May, 2004, suggest that COPD affects between 10 and 15 percent of adults over age 40 in the 6 countries studied. Previous statistics compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO) had estimated that 2 to 3 percent of adults over age 40 have COPD (4, 5).

*[Adapt release with local information here. Add local statistics and quotes from local expert(s).]*

“These new numbers provide us with a more accurate idea of just how great the burden of COPD is around the world,” says Leo Fabbri, MD, Executive Committee Chair of the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD), the group that organizes World COPD Day\*. “The good news is, effective treatments exist that can improve the lives of people with COPD and help slow the progression of the disease, but patients can only receive the benefits of these therapies if we stop ignoring COPD and increase our awareness, diagnosis, and treatment initiatives.”

To date, most national statistics on COPD have been based on the proportion of the population that is *being treated* for COPD. The disease however, often remains undiagnosed until it is already quite advanced (due to low symptom awareness and underdiagnosis), so this method is likely to underestimate the proportion of the population that *has* COPD.

The new studies, by contrast, involve administering a breathing test, called spirometry, to a representative sample of each country’s population in order to estimate the proportion of the population that actually has COPD. Further analysis of the data collected by the BOLD and PLATINO researchers will take place over the next year, and a more detailed picture of the impact and prevalence of COPD will emerge.

To help identify people with COPD at an earlier stage, GOLD has developed the “Breathing for Life” or “Could it be COPD?” Questionnaire\*\*, containing 5 simple questions about COPD symptoms. The questions in the Questionnaire were developed from a study in the general population of the US and they have been validated in recent research led by Peter Calverley, MD, a member of the GOLD Executive Committee. This research, a large population study in the UK, has shown that these 5 questions successfully identify the people most likely to have abnormal lung function.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

\*World COPD Day, a partnership between health care groups and respiratory educators to raise awareness about COPD, is being held for the third time this year. The event’s slogan is “Don’t Ignore COPD.” Events in more than 60 countries worldwide will be aimed at encouraging people at risk for COPD to see their doctor and begin treatment if they have the disease, and encouraging governments to make COPD a health care priority.

**\*\*Breathing for Life (or Could it be COPD?) Questionnaire:**

1. Do you cough several times most days? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Do you bring up phlegm or mucus most days? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Do you get out of breath more easily than others your age? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Are you older than 40 years? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. Are you a current smoker or an ex-smoker? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, ask your doctor if you might have COPD and should have a simple breathing test.

**References:**

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- 2) National Center for Health Statistics. Current estimates of the National Health Interview survey, United States, 1995. Washington DC: Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Vital and Health Statistics; 1995. Publication No. 96-1527.
- 3) National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Morbidity and mortality: chartbook on cardiovascular, lung, and blood diseases. Bethesda MD: US Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service, NIH Available from URL: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/docs/cht-book/htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/docs/cht-book/htm).
- 4) Soriano JR, Maier WC, Egger P, Visick G, Thakrar B, Sykes J, et al. Recent trends in physician diagnosed COPD in women and men in the UK. *Thorax* 2000; 55: 789-94.
- 5) Murray CJL, Lopez AD. Evidence-based health policy – lessons from the Global Burden of Disease Study. *Science* 1996; 274: 740-3.
- 6) PLATINO: A Population Based Study on the Prevalence of COPD in Sao Paulo, Brazil. J. Jardim, A.A. Camelier, F.W. Rose, R. Perez-Padilla, P. Hallal, C. Victora, A. Menezes. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med* 2004 169(7): A222.

