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There is an urgent need to prioritise care for COPD patients in India: Experts

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The lack of awareness of COPD contributes significantly to preventing people from seeking help and reaching out to their doctors



India is the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) capital of the world and ranks second in the world in COPD deaths. Public awareness of COPD is poor, which can result in a delay in COPD diagnosis. Further, delayed diagnosis and poor/suboptimal COPD management can result in flare-up of the disease leading to an attack in the lungs.

Says Dr Prashant Saxena, Director and HOD, Pulmonary and Sleep Dept, Associate Director - Critical Care, MAX Hospital, Saket said, “Persistent exposure to the risk factors and repeated respiratory infections can aggravate the underlying COPD leading to a lung attack. The lack of awareness of COPD contributes significantly to preventing people from seeking help and reaching out to their doctors. Identifying the signs and symptoms of COPD and lung attack and getting timely help from a physician is the best way to prevent further worsening of disease progression. If smokers and other people with risk factors understand that they can get a lung attack that requires urgent medical attention they will seek help early. Timely diagnosis of the disease is important which can be done by regularly checking lung function in patients who are symptomatic and at risk of COPD."

Spirometry, which is a lung function test, is the Gold Standard for the diagnosis of COPD. However, it is not commonly performed, and diagnosis is largely based on the patient’s history and symptoms. Not doing spirometry can result in a lot of COPD cases being missed.

Dr Nitin Rathi from Dharmasheela Narayana Super Speciality Hospital stated, “Early screening and diagnosis plays a very crucial role in decreasing the disease burden of lung attacks. Performing spirometry in populations with respiratory symptoms is vital as it avoids misdiagnosis and assists in evaluating the severity of the airflow limitation. While the causes for respiratory ailments may not completely be in one’s control, being alert and aware for timely detection is critical.”

Dr Jaideep Gogtay, Global Chief Medical Officer, Cipla, said, “At Cipla, we believe that the right awareness will help people understand the importance of early and accurate diagnosis of COPD and thus help prevent lung attack. With India having one of the highest COPD burdens in Asia, this becomes even more crucial."

Recently Cipla has launched Spirofy, India's first pneumotach based portable, wireless and affordable Spirometer.