

Heart disease risk can indicate long-term COPD fate

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A simple test for heart disease risk can go a long way toward determining the long-term prognosis for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, according to UC Irvine researchers.

Dr. Hwa Mu Lee and Nathan Wong of the UCI [Heart Disease Prevention Program](#) found that individuals with moderate to severe COPD who had a low Framingham Heart Study 10-year risk assessment rate lived longer and healthier than COPD patients who scored high on the heart test.

Study results point to the importance of cardiovascular health for those with COPD and strongly suggest that heart disease risk evaluations be part of the diagnostic and treatment procedures for [lung diseases](#) such as emphysema and bronchitis that affect 64 million people worldwide and are the third-leading cause of death in the U.S.

"There is a close connection between COPD and cardiovascular events like heart attacks, but too often physicians who see COPD patients do not assess the impact of [heart disease risk](#) factors as part of a treatment plan," said Lee, associate research director of the UCI program and an assistant clinical professor of medicine specializing in pulmonary and critical care.

"We're learning that addressing [cardiac risk factors](#) may significantly improve outcomes in persons with COPD," added Wong, program director and a professor of cardiology and epidemiology. "The

connection between these two diseases is underappreciated."

Lee and Wong examined the severity of COPD in 6,266 U.S. adults over 40 in relation to their 10-year [cardiovascular disease risk](#).

They noted that there are current National Institutes of Health-funded studies on whether statins – cholesterol-lowering drugs often prescribed for heart patients – can help lessen COPD-related lung inflammation.

Janet Lee, Katherine Lee and Yanting Luo of UCI, as well as Dr. Don Sin of St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, also contributed to the study, which appears online in the journal *Chest*.

Provided by University of California, Irvine

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