

High respiratory burden found in ageing population

September 4 2012

(Medical Xpress)—People aged 85 years and over have a high burden of respiratory disease, according to new findings from Newcastle University.

The research has shed light on the health problems likely to be encountered by the ageing population.

The research, presented today (3 September 2012) at the European Respiratory Society's annual Congress in Vienna, aimed to investigate the [respiratory health](#) of [people](#) at the extremes of the [ageing population](#).

The analysis revealed that overall, 20% of men and 21% of women had either asthma or COPD. 59% of men and 50% of women showed [airflow obstruction](#) when they undertook a spirometry test to measure lung function.

The initial results of the study suggest a significant burden of respiratory problems in a very [elderly population](#).

People aged 85 years and over are the fastest growing age group worldwide. As many [chronic diseases](#) are more common in older people, [population](#) ageing results in a higher number of people living with chronic conditions. [Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD) is one of the major illnesses affecting the elderly. As more people are living longer, it is likely that the number of cases of COPD will rise in the coming years.

Researchers from Newcastle University aimed to investigate the current burden of [respiratory conditions](#) in the elderly population. The research, was conducted as part of the Newcastle 85+ study, a 5-year longitudinal study assessing and following the health and vitality of members of the general population from the year they reach 85 years of age. It is funded principally by the UK Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Dunhill Medical Trust.

The study includes comprehensive demographic, physiological, clinical and biological assessments of health and vitality. For this paper, the research team worked with 845 people aged 85 years and over from the UK.

Lead author, Therese Small, from the Freeman Hospital and Newcastle University in the UK, said: "These results are from the Newcastle 85+ Study, a major 5 year study looking at the health status of very elderly people. The results provide a novel insight into the future health care needs of this rapidly growing population.

"Over the next few years, it will be crucial for healthcare professionals to understand the problems the aging population will face and these preliminary results can help us prepare for a change in the way the elderly population are treated in the future."

Professor Tom Kirkwood, Associate Dean for Ageing at Newcastle University, and lead investigator of the Newcastle 85+ Study, said: "It's really essential to fill the current gaps in knowledge about the health of the fastest growing sector of the population, and these data on respiratory disease are a particularly important part of this effort".

Professor Andrew Fisher, from Newcastle University, who led the Respiratory theme of the study, said: "Our results confirm a significant prevalence of obstructive spirometry in the 85+ population, further

evaluation of this unique dataset will allow us to examine how much of this is attributable to healthy ageing of the lungs and how much to the airways disease in this population of very old people."

More information: Presenting at the European Respiratory Society's annual Congress in Vienna : Abstract: Respiratory health at the extremes of the ageing population: Initial results of the UK Newcastle 85+ study

Provided by Newcastle University

Citation: High respiratory burden found in ageing population (2012, September 4) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

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