

New COPD action plan outlines strategies for improved care

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COPD is the third-leading cause of death in the United States. But public awareness of the condition lags far behind its impact.

"Unfortunately, we estimate there are millions of other Americans living with the disease who have not yet been diagnosed," says Meilan Han, M.D., an associate professor of internal medicine at Michigan Medicine and the medical director of the University of Michigan Women's Respiratory Health Program. "That's why we need to create more public awareness around this lung disease."

Han is a part of the National Institutes of Health's National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute group that recently created a new COPD National Action Plan. Released at the American Thoracic Society's International Conference in Washington, D.C., it outlines key goals, including raising public awareness of COPD, advancing research, improving patient care and health delivery, and developing management strategies for patients.

"Most people don't realize that COPD is actually a manageable disease," says Han, also a volunteer spokesperson for the American Lung Association, a partner in creation of the plan. "The plan outlines the importance [public awareness](#) plays in this disease. So many people go undiagnosed, but perhaps having more education around their symptoms, would prompt them to reach out to their physician for care."

What physicians should know

The formulation of the plan began in early 2016 with a COPD Town Hall Meeting, where stakeholders shared their thoughts. In the end, the group set five key goals for awareness and treatment of COPD:

- Empower people with COPD, their families and caregivers to recognize and reduce the burden of the disease.
- Promote education and training for [health care](#) professionals to improve the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of COPD.
- Collect, analyze, disseminate and report COPD-related public health data that drive change and track progress.
- Increase and sustain research to better understand the prevention, pathogenesis, diagnosis, treatment and management of COPD.
- Translate national policy, educational and program recommendations into legislative, research and [public health care](#) actions.

Each goal includes strategies for accomplishment.

"We want to see health care practitioners and the health care community keep this deadly condition top of mind," Han says. "As a researcher, physician and advocate for patients with this disease, I know I speak for myself and the committee when I say that we hope this plan helps create additional [awareness](#) for COPD and undiagnosed patients receive the care they need. For those already diagnosed, we hope to continue to provide high-quality education and [health](#) care to help them manage this incurable disease."

Provided by University of Michigan

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