

# Study sheds light on the impact of COPD on working aged populations

25 September 2011

New research has revealed the devastating personal and financial impact that chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can have on the working population.

The findings, which are to be presented today (25 September 2011) at the European Respiratory Society's Annual Congress in Amsterdam, provides new perspectives on the personal and [social impact](#) the condition can have on the 45-65 year age group.

- 80% reported they were unable to maintain the same lifestyle as before; one in four described being unable to care for their children or family as they usually would; additionally, around 1 in 5 felt they were a burden to their family and friends.
- Over half felt they went out and visited people less, with a similar number of respondents (52%) reporting that their [cough](#) (typically a persistent symptom of [COPD](#)) was embarrassing when they were in public.
- 41% reported being unable to plan for their future, with over a third of [respondents](#) (37%) reporting their total household income had decreased as a result of their condition.

The findings suggest that people with COPD are restricted by their disease in terms of achieving their life goals, socialising with others and caring for their family. This confirms the devastating psychosocial and [financial impact](#) of COPD, particularly on people who are within the working age group.

COPD affects around 210 million people worldwide, and an increasing number of people diagnosed with the disease are under 65. The

study aimed to assess the effect on this population as the impact could vary between this group and the over-65 age group, which has generally received much more attention.

The researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey in six countries asking participants about the social and economic impact of the disease on individuals and their families. The questionnaire covered a number of topics, including effect on [household income](#), ability to maintain lifestyles, planning for the future and the impact of the illness on family and friends.

Monica Fletcher, Chief Executive of Education for Health, Chair of the European Lung Foundation and lead author of the research said: "COPD is one of the leading causes of morbidity in Europe and death from the disease has doubled over the last three decades. It is clear from our findings that many people do not feel able to maintain their usual lifestyle whilst coping with the disease."

She continued: "In addition to having a severe impact on a person's quality-of-life, the loss of activity within this productive age group can have a serious economic impact at a societal level. Significant cost, societal and quality of life benefits could be achieved if greater steps were taken to: prevent the condition, such as greater access to smoking cessation programs, earlier diagnosis and appropriate management strategies to control the condition and arrest disease progression."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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