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Give COPD patients the chance to live healthier through exercise

Brussels, 15/11/2017 World COPD Day – Physical activity positively impacts our health and wellbeing. Under the theme *The Many Faces of COPD*, EFA calls on European and national authorities to promote active lives for COPD patients, by facilitating the access to and reimbursement of pulmonary rehabilitation, support for regular exercise and by staying in the workforce.

EFA President Mikaela Odemyr says: “COPD is a devastating disease that is often diagnosed later than it could be, limiting patients’ capacity to fight back against the disease on time. To stop their bodies and lives deteriorating, COPD patients need a multidisciplinary team, including pulmonary physiotherapists, to guide and support them in improving their lives after diagnosis”.

Although exercise does not replace medication, a daily physical activity can help COPD patients win the battle. Not only is COPD severity lower in employed patients, but also they visit the pneumologist less often, take less cortisone and antibiotics and end up less often in hospital when they are active patients. (1)

Only in France hospitalisations due to COPD rose by 15% from 2007 to 2012, incurring an increase from 602 to 678 million euros (+12.6 %). (2)

Latest estimations have pointed COPD was the second cause of death worldwide in 2016, after ischaemic heart disease. (3)

Exercising on a regular basis is the most important prerequisite to live longer in the case of COPD, but patients, especially those at severe stages, often feel overwhelmed to start training alone. Exercises adapted to their lung function, professional and supervised support, with measures showing health status progression, are crucial to help patients currently living with this chronic disease. (4)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a progressive disease that results in changes in several parts of the respiratory system and lungs at the same time. In Europe, COPD affects 1 in 10 adults over 40, causing inflammation in the lungs, damaging lung tissue and narrowing the airways, making breathing progressively worse. (5)

In 2017, 1 in 3 Members of the European Parliament signed a written declaration on the necessity to guarantee rehabilitation for chronic respiratory disease patients, as well as any multidisciplinary intervention to keep people in the workforce and their homes as long as possible. (6)

Notes to editors:

Accompanying EFA video on World COPD Day features Isabel Saraiva, COPD patient and vice director of EFA Member RESPIRA Portugal: <https://youtu.be/CYEi2Ay7ozM>

- (1) "Disease Progression and Changes in Physical Activity in Patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease", B. Waschki *et al.*, American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, 1 August 2015: http://www.atsjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1164/rccm.201501-0081OC?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3dpubmed
- (2) "Rising total costs and mortality rates associated with admissions due to COPD exacerbations", N. Molinari, *et al.*, Respiratory Research 14 November 2016. Last accessed 2/11/2017: <https://respiratory-research.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12931-016-0469-6>
- (3) "Global, regional, and national age-sex specific mortality for 264 causes of death, 1980–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016", in The Lancet Global Burden of Disease 2016, 16/09/2017: [http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)32152-9/fulltext](http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)32152-9/fulltext). Analysis of COPD mortality in "COPD already ranks as 2nd cause of death worldwide", EFA, 5 October 2017. Last accessed 2/11/2017: <http://www.efanet.org/resources/library/3226-copd-already-ranks-as-the-second-cause-of-death-worldwide>
- (4) #COPDMove is an EFA project that sheds light on the importance of physical exercise to reduce the degrading impact Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease has on patients' lives. The project consists on 10 focus interviews with patients doing their physical routine, encouraging and explaining others their strategies to cope with COPD. These testimonials are coupled with a physical training tutorial composed of simple exercises to motivate COPD patients train frequently, everywhere. <https://www.youtube.com/user/EFAADPA/playlists>
- (5) "Lung Health in Europe – Facts and Figures" December 2013, European Lung Foundation, page 44. Last accessed 02/11/2017: http://www.europeanlung.org/assets/files/publications/lung_health_in_europe_facts_and_figures_web.pdf
- (6) "Written declaration on chronic respiratory diseases", European Parliament, 24 October 2016. Last accessed 2/11/2017: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bWDECL%2bP8-DCL-2016-0115%2b0%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN>

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a network of 42 allergy, asthma and COPD patients' organisations in 25 European countries and it works for European patients with allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to live uncompromised lives, have the right and access to the best quality care and a safe environment. **Twitter:** @EFA_Patients #COPDMove

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