

World COPD day 2012

## **Low awareness of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) confirmed in a recent survey**

**COPD (also known as 'chronic bronchitis' and 'emphysema') is one of the most common causes of death and the only one with increasing prevalence worldwide<sup>1</sup>**

**Barcelona, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012** – An online survey of 2,000 Europeans indicates that nearly three quarters of people have very limited knowledge of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD),<sup>2</sup> a disease affecting around 44 million people in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Symptoms that can be indicative of COPD including shortness of breath, persistent cough and phlegm were believed to be part of the normal aging process by many people questioned as part of the survey (shortness of breath [37%], persistent cough [27%] and phlegm [21%]).<sup>2</sup> This suggests that people do not consult a healthcare professional about such symptoms, potentially leading to delayed diagnosis. By highlighting these results Almirall, sponsor of this survey, aim to encourage early detection and accurate diagnosis of COPD, demonstrating its commitment to improving the quality of life for sufferers through early diagnosis and effective management which can improve patients' longer term prognoses.

COPD has historically been seen as a disease that affects old men, despite the fact that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), nowadays men and women are equally affected<sup>4</sup>. The survey highlighted that, interestingly, people are not fully aware of the 'changing face of COPD', with 25% of survey responders believing that men are still more affected than women.<sup>2</sup> Whereas in reality newly diagnosed patients are more likely to be women than men due, in part, to increased tobacco use among women in high-income countries.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, COPD is the sixth leading cause of death worldwide affecting around one in ten of all adults,<sup>3</sup> but with a rising prevalence it is predicted to become the third leading cause of death by 2020.<sup>4</sup> COPD is significantly under-diagnosed with estimates suggesting that they represent only half of actual sufferers.<sup>5</sup>

COPD is a debilitating disease that leads to damaged airways in the lungs, causing them to become narrower and making it harder for air to get in and out of the lungs. COPD is diagnosed following a spirometry test performed by a healthcare professional, which is a test that measures the functioning of the lungs. Patients can experience symptoms throughout the day and night, including chronic cough, phlegm (sputum) and shortness of breath. This limits their ability to perform daily activities and leads to poor quality of life.

In addition to the impact of the disease on a patient's quality of life, COPD poses a significant financial burden to society. The direct costs of delivering healthcare for respiratory diseases are estimated to be approximately 6% of the total healthcare budget, with COPD accounting for more than half (56%) of this expenditure, equating to €38.6 billion.<sup>3, 6</sup> In the EU, approximately 41.3% lost work days are due to COPD every year and productivity losses due to COPD amount to a total of €28.5 billion annually.<sup>6</sup>

### **Media enquiries:**

Bianca Daneshfar-Nia  
+44 20 7611 3510

[bianca.daneshfar-nia@ketchumpleon.com](mailto:bianca.daneshfar-nia@ketchumpleon.com)

## Media resources:

Infographic 'The Changing Face of COPD'

Available via <http://www.flickr.com/photos/changingfaceofcopd/8169316950>

## About the survey

Almirall, S.A. commissioned an online survey through OnePoll to assess people's perceptions and understanding of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The survey was conducted in Germany and Spain. One thousand consumers aged eighteen years and over were surveyed in each country. Survey figures used within this release are averages calculated from the German and Spanish results.

## About COPD

COPD is the occurrence of chronic bronchitis or emphysema, a pair of commonly co-existing diseases of the lungs in which the airways become narrowed. This leads to a limitation of the flow of air to and from the lungs, causing shortness of breath (dyspnoea). In clinical practice, COPD is defined by its characteristically low airflow on lung function tests.

The most common symptoms of COPD are breathlessness (an increased effort to breathe), heaviness or a 'need for air', excessive mucus, and a chronic cough. Some people feel they are gasping for breath. These symptoms get worse when exercising, in case of a respiratory infection or during an exacerbation – periods of time when there is a sudden increase in symptoms and the disease is worse. COPD affects the ability to breathe and is a progressive disease, which means that COPD gets worse over time. Daily activities may become more difficult as the disease worsens. There are significant unmet needs in the treatment of COPD and new therapies may be of value.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has described COPD as a global epidemic, and it is estimated that 210 million people suffer COPD worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

Approximately 200,000–300,000 people die each year in Europe because of COPD<sup>7</sup>. Patients experiencing frequent exacerbations are at risk of increased morbidity and mortality, a faster decline in lung function, and poorer health status.

## About Almirall

Almirall, S.A. is an international pharmaceutical company based on innovation and committed to health. Headquartered in Barcelona, it researches, develops, manufactures and commercialises its own R&D and licensed drugs with the aim of improving people's health and wellbeing. Almirall focuses its research resources on respiratory, gastrointestinal, dermatology and pain. Almirall's products are currently present in over 70 countries in the five continents. It has direct presence in Europe, Mexico and Canada through 13 affiliates.

Almirall's respiratory franchise includes aclidinium bromide, a long-acting muscarinic antagonist, approved in Europe and the USA in July of this year) and complemented by a combination of aclidinium and formoterol, currently in clinical development stage (Phase III), and abediterol (a once daily LABA combined with an ICS).

For further information please visit: [www.almirall.com](http://www.almirall.com)

## References

1 European COPD Coalition. Key Facts. Available at: <http://www.copdcoalition.eu/about-copd/key-facts> [Accessed: October 2012]

2 Almirall sponsored OnePoll online survey of 2000 people aged 18+ in Germany and Spain (averages calculated from German and Spanish results)

3 European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients Associations (EFA). Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Available at: <http://www.efanet.org/hronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease/> [Accessed: October 2012]

4 World Health Organization. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Fact Sheet. 2011. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs315/en/index.html> [Accessed: October 2012]

5 Clinical Key. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Elsevier. Available at: <https://www.clinicalkey.com/topics/gerontology/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease.html> [Accessed: October 2012]

6 European Lung Foundation. European Lung White Book. Brussels: European Lung Foundation. 2003. Available at: [http://dev.ersnet.org/uploads/Document/45/WEB\\_CHEMIN\\_1263\\_1168339451.pdf](http://dev.ersnet.org/uploads/Document/45/WEB_CHEMIN_1263_1168339451.pdf)

7 Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease 2011. Available at: [http://www.goldcopd.org/uploads/users/files/GOLD\\_Report\\_2011\\_Feb21.pdf](http://www.goldcopd.org/uploads/users/files/GOLD_Report_2011_Feb21.pdf) [Accessed: October 2012]