

Novartis, Philippine College of Chest Physicians launch COPD awareness campaign

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- *Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), the seventh leading cause of death in the Philippines, has a destructive impact on patients' function and quality of life, and increases the risk of developing heart disease, lung cancer, and a variety of other conditions. The good news is that it is treatable.*
- *While smoking is the most common cause of COPD, non-smokers are also at risk of developing the disease. Risk factors include second-hand cigarette smoke, air pollution and fumes from fuel burned for cooking and heating.*
- *Awareness on COPD is low among the general population, and the underutilization of spirometry by doctors has resulted in under-diagnosis of the disease.*
- *Novartis Healthcare Philippines and the Philippine College of Chest Physicians (PCCP) have launched the BREATHE initiative to increase public awareness on COPD and to enhance the knowledge of local healthcare professionals in COPD diagnosis and management.*

Makati City, October 18, 2017 – While smoking is the most common cause of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), non-smokers are also at risk of developing this debilitating and life-threatening inflammatory disease that causes obstructed airflow from the lungs. People exposed to large amounts of secondhand cigarette smoke, air pollution, and fumes from burning fuel for cooking and heating in poorly ventilated homes are at risk of developing COPD.¹⁻⁴

Awareness on COPD is low among the general population, and a number of doctors are unaware of updates in the diagnosis and management of COPD. Moreover, there is underutilization of spirometry, a lung function test considered as the gold standard for confirming the diagnosis of COPD and assessing symptoms and exacerbations. As a result, COPD under-diagnosis represents one of the main challenges. These were among the key findings of a recent study entitled “The Global Burden of COPD” published in the journal *Respirology*.⁵

To help address this problem, the Philippine College of Chest Physicians (PCCP) and Novartis Healthcare Philippines have launched the BREATHE initiative. BREATHE, which stands for Broadening Reach, Enhancing Awareness, and Transforming Health Education, aims to increase public awareness on avoiding or mitigating COPD risk factors as well as to enhance the knowledge of local healthcare professionals in COPD diagnosis and management.

“COPD is the seventh leading cause of death in the Philippines.⁶ Novartis fully supports the PCCP in implementing the BREATHE initiative and achieving our shared goal of making more Filipinos aware of COPD and easing its heavy disease burden in the country,” said Ms. Cheryl Maley, President & Managing Director, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

COPD symptoms include breathing difficulty, cough, mucus (sputum) production and wheezing.¹ These symptoms have a destructive impact on patients' function (i.e. activity limitation, decreased mobility) and quality of life.^{7,8} COPD is often a combination of two conditions: emphysema and chronic bronchitis.⁹ People with COPD are at increased risk of developing heart disease, lung cancer and a variety of other conditions.¹⁰

The good news is COPD is treatable. With proper management, most people with COPD can control their symptoms and enhance quality of life, as well as reduce their risk of other associated conditions.¹

Activities to be implemented through the BREATHE initiative include the holding of lay fora and free clinics, including the provision of medical services such as spirometry. BREATHE will promote the use of digital platforms and social media to disseminate information and promote public awareness on COPD. Continuing Medical Education (CME) activities will also be conducted using modern e-congress technology such as webinars to enhance the knowledge of local healthcare professionals in COPD diagnosis and management, particularly in spirometry.

The launch of the BREATHE initiative is part of the activities that the PCCP and Novartis Healthcare Philippines are undertaking in preparation for the country's observance of World COPD Day on November 15, 2017, which will have the theme "The Many Faces of COPD". World COPD Day is an annual event organized by the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) in collaboration with healthcare professionals and COPD patient groups throughout the world.¹¹

World COPD Day aims to raise awareness about COPD and improve COPD care throughout the world. Each year GOLD chooses a theme and coordinates preparation and distribution of World COPD Day materials and resources. World COPD Day activities are organized in each country by health care professionals, educators, and members of the public who want to help reduce the burden of COPD. The first World COPD Day was held in 2002. Each year organizers in more than 50 countries worldwide have carried out activities, making the day one of the world's most important COPD awareness and education events.¹¹

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List of links present in page

- <https://www.novartis.com/ph-en/ph-en/news/media-releases/novartis-philippine-college-chest-physicians-launch-copd-awareness-campaign>
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- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs315/en/>
- <http://www.who.int/respiratory/copd/causes/en/>
- <http://www.doh.gov.ph/national-objectives-health-2011-2016.html>
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