

EDITORIAL

See article: Uzel FI, Karadağ P, Tural Önur S, et al. A Basic Question: Are Patients with COPD Aware of Their Disease? Turk Thorac J 2017;18:114-8.

If You Know the Enemy and Your Weapons, You Need not Fear the Management of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

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Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a preventable and treatable disease that is characterized by irreversible and progressive airflow limitations [1]. The prevalence of COPD is approximately 20%, and it is one of the most important causes of morbidity and mortality [1]. Morbidity and mortality rates due to COPD are gradually increasing, and COPD has been estimated to be third leading cause of death by the end of 2020 [2]. However, it is not yet appropriately diagnosed and treated.

Although it is a frequent and severe disease, the general population lacks awareness on COPD. In a study from Canada, the awareness rate of COPD was 17%, whereas the awareness rates of breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, and Alzheimer's disease were 95%, 95%, and 94%, respectively [3]. In a study from Turkey, which is part of the Global Alliance Against Respiratory Disorders project, 49.6% of the participants correctly stated that COPD mainly affected the lungs [4]. Among the participants, 47% declared that they did not know which organ was affected. Ersu et al. investigated the awareness rate of COPD among primary care doctors, and approximately half of the primary care physicians answered that they were aware about COPD [5].

This issue of the journal includes a research study that evaluated awareness on COPD in patients with COPD. In this study, Uzel et al. administered a questionnaire to 201 ambulatory COPD patients in a single center [6]. The questionnaire comprised 15 questions related to the symptoms of COPD, the status of smoking, the meaning of COPD, the organ primarily affected and the location of the organ in the body, and the treatment and etiology of COPD. The authors also asked whether the patients searched for information on COPD. While 78% knew that the acronym "COPD" stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, only 3.5 could correctly write chronic obstructive lung disease in Turkish. Three of four knew the affected organ to be the lung and its location. Sixty-six percent did not search for information about their disease, and 59% mentioned cigarette smoking as the most important causal factor of the disease. Education level was related awareness on the disease, but age and, interestingly, the GOLD stage did not. The compliance of patients to the treatment is an integral part of COPD management. In the current study, 12% of the patients believed that inhaler drugs cause addiction and 4.5% stated that COPD is a contagious disease. The promising side was that at least 53% of the patients believed that COPD is a treatable disease.

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