

Health Awareness

Free Informational Card Raises Awareness Of Leading Causes Of Death In U.S.

(NAPSA)—An educational program will soon help more Americans understand the health effects of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

COPD afflicts an estimated 13.3 million Americans and is the fourth leading cause of death behind cardiovascular disease, cancers and stroke.

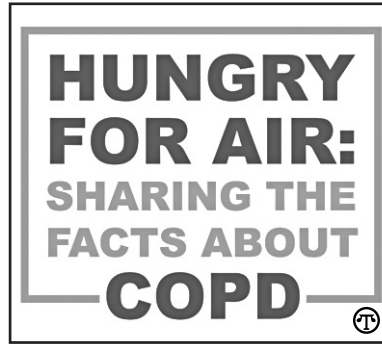
The condition affects both men and women, and for the first time, the number of deaths due to COPD in 2000 was higher among women than men.

Additionally, approximately 24 million U.S. adults have evidence of impaired lung function, indicating COPD may be under diagnosed.

That's why for the first time the American Lung Association is offering a free informational card about Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

Developed as part of a partnership to raise public awareness about COPD by the American Lung Association and ALTANA Pharma, the "Hungry For Air: Sharing The Facts About COPD" informational card contains questions individuals should ask themselves to determine if they are potentially at-risk for COPD.

"The best way I've heard patients describe having COPD is that they are 'hungry for air'," said Dr. Norman Edelman, medical consultant for the American Lung Association and vice president for Health Sciences and professor of Medicine at SUNY Stony Brook University. "It is vital that individuals consult with their



Early diagnosis is the key to treating COPD—Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

physician because early diagnosis of COPD is the key to treating this disease."

Each informational card includes perforated "share cards" that can be detached and given to anyone you think may have COPD. Those who answer yes to one or more of the questions on the card are encouraged to consult their physician and ask about a lung function test.

Some questions include:

- Are you a current or former smoker?
- Do you frequently experience a deep, chronic wet cough?
- When completing routine activities, such as climbing a flight of stairs, are you short of breath?

Primary symptoms of COPD include chronic wet cough, shortness of breath, an increased effort to breathe, increased mucus production and frequent clearing of the throat.

Emerging evidence indicates

that COPD also is a disease of systemic inflammation dominated by the production of neutrophils, which may cause epithelial and endothelial damage and lung remodeling.

This means that as COPD becomes more severe, it affects the entire body and makes muscles weaker.

"Our fear is that many individuals who suffer from COPD have feelings of guilt and shame because they feel they've brought the disease upon themselves and are therefore ignoring or misinterpreting the signs," said Dr. Edelman.

According to estimates by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, chronic bronchitis and emphysema take a heavy toll on our economy. In 2002, the annual cost to the nation for COPD was \$32.1 billion. This included \$18 billion in direct health care expenditures, \$6.8 billion in indirect morbidity costs and \$7.3 billion in indirect mortality costs.

COPD cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. Early diagnosis and treatment can slow its progression and greatly enhance a patient's health and quality of life.

"We want to educate individuals—and their families and friends—about COPD and encourage them to discuss their concerns with their doctors," said Dr. Edelman.

The FREE informational card is available by calling 1-877-COPD-INFO or by visiting www.lungusa.org.