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Study Highlights Devastating Global Economic and Social Impact of COPD

New Orleans 18 May 2010 A study presented today at the American Thoracic Society (ATS) Conference in New Orleans by leading charity, Education for Health (EFH), shows that the economic toll of COPD is set to soar¹ as the disease heads towards being the third biggest cause of death globally by 2020². The international and expert-led survey is the first of its kind detailing the impact of COPD on a working-age population and highlights an urgent need to keep individuals with COPD active and contributing to society for the benefit of all¹.

The survey highlights that society faces a double economic impact from the growing COPD crisis. Patients are losing an average of \$1800 per year in lost income due to their COPD, which equates to lifetime losses of nearly \$20,000. Nearly 1 in 5 of 45-68 year olds are forced to retire prematurely due to the condition, thereby incurring increased health costs and reducing personal contribution from taxation¹.

In addition to the global financial impact of COPD, the survey also illustrates the personal and quality of life consequences for individuals, including effects on their household income, certainty for the future and being able to maintain the same level of lifestyle prior to diagnosis^{1,3}. This not only affects individuals with the disease but other family members, potentially restricting their lifestyle choices and earning abilities – further compounding the problem.

Education for Health Chief Executive, Monica Fletcher said: “The survey results clearly demonstrate the social and economic consequences of COPD between the ages of 45-68. In order to stem the rising economic and social costs of this disease we must look at practical ways in which policy makers, the medical community and other stakeholders such as employers can take a more active role in supporting people with COPD to remain active and in the workplace for longer.”



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COPD has, by many, been considered a disease which only affects elderly populations. However, this data clearly demonstrates that the social and economic effect on a younger working population has been overlooked. Therefore, early diagnosis and management of COPD within this age group may enable this important group to maintain active and product lives for longer, helping to reduce the economic burden of the condition and improve patient quality of life^{1,3}.

Monica Fletcher continued, "There is a vital need for both patient and healthcare professionals to ensure that they are up-to-date with new developments in the management of COPD but we must not forget that those responsible for workforce education need to be part of the solution."

Approximately 210 million people worldwide are currently known to be living with COPD⁴. Symptoms are often mistakenly attributed to aging or other respiratory diseases such as asthma, resulting in COPD being undetected in about 50% of cases⁵ and misdiagnosed in about 23%⁶. A 30% increase in prevalence is expected by the year 2030³. The estimated prevalence of COPD includes approximately 4-13% of adults in Europe⁷⁻¹¹ and approximately 7% of adults in the United States¹². While COPD was previously more common in men, an increase in smoking among women has led to the disease affecting men and women almost equally⁴.

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Notes to Editors

About Education for Health

Education for Health is the largest international charity that undertakes research which contributes to the evidence base for health professional education as a health improvement intervention; and trains health professionals to make a real difference to the lives of patients with long term conditions. With an active advocacy programme, lobbying strategy and sustainable educational projects across the globe, Education for



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Health unveiled new elearning plans last week. These will enable the Charity to support stakeholders across the global COPD community to improve their health and social care workforce skills in earlier COPD diagnosis and management and ultimately contribute to reducing the economic impact of COPD.

About the Survey

The survey is directed by a multi-disciplinary committee of international experts and led by research and training specialist organization Education for Health. Monica Fletcher, Chief Executive, Education for Health, is the lead investigator. The research was supported by an educational grant from Novartis Pharma A.G.

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Download a copy of the COPD Uncovered Report here: <http://bit.ly/aJBBcL>

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