A global survey conducted to determine frequency of exacerbations in COPD patients

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Background

• According to new GOLD 2013 guidelines, assessment of COPD is based on the patient’s level of symptoms, pulmonary exacerbation history, the severity of the functional impairment, and the identification of comorbidities. Whereas spirometry was previously used to support a diagnosis of COPD, spirometry is now required to make a confident diagnosis of COPD.

• Objective of the survey was to analyze the level of exacerbations of COPD patients and the different patterns of management of COPD patients worldwide.

Methods

• During 2012, a global on-line survey was launched to physicians from 74 countries, who previously have participated in a Quintiles study or have expressed an interest in conducting clinical trials
• Participants were not reimbursed to participate
• Participants were asked about current practices regarding patient management
• Questionnaire was created directly using Clicktools® software, so answers received were downloaded directly into database to avoid data entry errors
• This questionnaire was created in 2011, using the functional stage based on spirometry as a way to classify in GOLD levels

• Results are presented as mean (SD) of the percentages reported by survey participants, therefore sum of all values may not be equal to 100
• Abbreviations used:
  • SABD: short acting bronchodilators either beta2 agonists or antimuscarinic
  • LABA: long acting beta2 agonist
  • LAMA: long acting antimuscarinic
  • ICS: inhaled corticosteroids
  • LTOT: long term oxygen therapy

Results

Response was obtained from 1622 physicians

A great majority of the participants reported they were using GOLD 2011 guidelines to diagnose and to manage their patients

The frequency on clinical visits to the patients is similar in all the different regions of the world, according to GOLD functional stage classification and also the GOLD guidelines are globally followed.

Distribution of patients in the different GOLD functional stages was similar in the different regions of the world.

More severe exacerbations were found in functional groups GOLD 3 and GOLD 4. This may have biased the results to hospital practice rules.

Conclusions

• GOLD guidelines are globally followed.
• The combination of ICS + LABA is the most frequently prescribed treatment for COPD patients.
• Exacerbations in COPD patients are quite common, their frequency is related to functional stage classification of GOLD 1 to 4.
• Exacerbations only requiring antibiotics are more common than those requiring hospitalizations.
• More severe exacerbations were found in functional groups GOLD 3 and GOLD 4.
• Classifying patients only in terms of functional stage, seems not being able to capture differences regarding exacerbations within population groups.