



CERTIFICATION IN MANAGEMENT OF COPD AVAILABLE

by Dave Gourley RRT

In November, The Joint Commission officially announced its new Disease-Specific Care Program for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) management. The announcement coincided with COPD Awareness Month. As we respiratory therapists are well aware, COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. There are over 120,000 deaths attributed to COPD each year. In addition, it is estimated that more than 11 million people are affected by COPD. This new program is an addition to the other disease-specific certifications currently offered by The Joint Commission, such as Primary Stroke, In-patient Diabetes, Lung Volume Reduction, and Chronic Kidney Disease.

This new disease-specific certification program was developed in collaboration with the American Lung Association. The task force utilized the Global initiative for chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease ((2006), and the American Thoracic Society (ATS)/European Respiratory Society (ERS) Standards for the Diagnosis and Management of Patients with COPD (updated 2005), as resources in the development of the program. The program realizes that healthcare organizations across the country are making continuous improvements to provide quality management and positive outcomes for COPD patients. The goal of the program is to promote successful efforts in COPD care through:

- A standard method of delivering or coordinating care;
- Implementation of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines;
- A secure and timely system for sharing information across settings and providers, which safeguards patient rights and privacy;
- A comprehensive performance improvement program which uses outcomes data to continually enhance existing treatment plans and clinical practices; and
- Clinical practices which support self-management activities.

Jean Range, M.S., R.N., C.P.H.Q., executive director of Disease-Specific Care Certification at The Joint Commission stated, "The Joint Commission's Certificate of Distinction for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease recognizes organizations that make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for COPD patients. Achievement of certification signifies that the services at these organizations have the critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes. It is the best signal to the community that the quality of care provided is effectively managed to meet the unique and specialized needs of COPD patients." American Lung Association president and chief executive officer, Bernadette

Toomey stated, "In just over 40 years, key medical and scientific discoveries have deepened our knowledge of chronic bronchitis and emphysema to the point where we can effectively treat COPD. Evidence shows that when health care professionals focus on the whole patient and apply best practice, patients do have the best outcomes. The Certificate of Distinction for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease recognizes those programs that foster the best patient outcomes and moves us toward the goal of patients having access to this state-of-the-art approach. The American Lung Association salutes The Joint Commission and is pleased to be a partner in this program that will decrease the burden of COPD and improve the quality of life for patients and their families." The Disease-specific Certification standards are divided into five areas:

- Program Management
- Delivering or Facilitating Clinical Care
- Supporting Self-Management
- Clinical Information Management
- Performance Measurement and Improvement

Program management includes design and implementation of the program and evaluating the program. In addition, provision of access to care is assessed. Ethical conduct and resources available to practitioners are the final areas reviewed in program management. The standards in Delivering or Facilitating Clinical Care include use of qualified and competent practitioners (respiratory therapists are specifically noted). The use of evidence based clinical practice guidelines (CPG) is also required in these standards. Individualized patient care, based on need is another focus, in addition to continuous improvement of practice. Supporting

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Self-Management standards focus on collaborative decision making among participants. The program must also address lifestyle and behavioral changes that support self-management. Lastly, the program must educate the participants to achieve the goals of self-management.

Clinical Information Management includes gathering and sharing information to coordinate care across the continuum of care. Also, there must be easy access to patient information for practitioners. The standards also require preserving confidentiality, maintaining data quality and integrity, and integrating data from various sources.

Performance Measurement is the final group of standards. These standards require an organized, comprehensive approach to performance improvement. This includes trending and comparing data to evaluate processes and outcomes, use of information to improve clinical practice, evaluation of perception of care (patient satisfaction specific to this program), and data quality and integrity.

Of specific interest to respiratory therapists who will be involved in preparing for this certification, the following are a sample of requirements:

- Education of staff on management of COPD
- Review and selection of CPGs
- Influenzal and pneumococcal vaccines offered to all patients
- Counseling of COPD patients on risk factors
- Clinical assessment, including
 - Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency

- Spirometry

- Assessment and education on use of inhalers & other medications
- Smoking cessation counseling
- Availability of COPD support groups

Achievement of disease-specific certification signifies that the services an organization provides have the critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes. It is an excellent way to demonstrate that the quality of care you provide is effectively managed to meet the unique and specialized needs of COPD patients.

At this time, there are three organizations nationwide who have obtained this certification in COPD management. Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack, New Jersey, McKesson Health Solutions in Broomfield, Colorado, and Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia have already completed the certification process.

The Joint Commission is currently accepting applications from organizations interested in achieving COPD certification. For more information about the COPD certification program, you may call (630) 792-5291 or e-mail Jean Range at dscinfo@joint-commission.org. In addition, you can also find information available on The Joint Commission website which you can visit at <http://www.jointcommission.org/CertificationPrograms/COPD/>.

David Gourley, RRT is a veteran therapist and former Department Director. He is now Vice President of Regulatory affairs at Chilton Memorial Hospital, Pompton Plains, NJ. He can be reached at Dag29@aol.com