

Perception and Awareness of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Bronchitis and Pulmonary Emphysema in the Spanish Urban Population[☆]



Notoriedad y perfil de imagen de la enfermedad pulmonar obstructiva crónica, la bronquitis crónica y el enfisema pulmonar en la población urbana española

To the Editor,

Understanding how the general public interpret the terms given to different respiratory diseases may help shape appropriate health education policies and strategies for preventing these conditions.¹

One of the objectives of the SEPAR COPD and Smoking Year was to increase awareness and knowledge of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) among the general Spanish population. We conducted an observational perception and awareness study to test the degree of familiarity with the terms COPD, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema, and to determine how the adult Spanish urban population perceived these diseases. Two types of awareness were defined: spontaneous (one of the first 3 or 4 diseases mentioned when a respondent is asked to list the diseases they have heard of), and prompted (recognition of a specific disease when asked directly about it). A voluntary, anonymous telephone survey was conducted among individuals aged 18–75 years, resident in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, and Seville, between April and May 2016. Land-line telephone numbers were selected at random.² In total, 3809 calls were placed, and 640 responses (16.8%) were obtained; 65.6% were women, 13.8% were smokers, and 80.2% stated that they did not have any chronic disease.

Results showed that cancer, with 147 (23%) mentions, headed the list of chronic diseases mentioned spontaneously (“top of

mind”),³ while chronic bronchitis was in fifth place, with 22 (3.4%) responses, and COPD in sixth place, with 20 (3.1%) responses. When asked to list respiratory diseases, the “top of mind” disease was asthma, with 216 (33.8%) responses, followed by pneumonia with 150 (23.4%), chronic bronchitis with 71 (11.1%), COPD with 33 (5.2%), and lung cancer with 17 (2.7%). To analyze prompted awareness,^{3,4} respondents were asked about their familiarity with a selection of 7 diseases: asthma, chronic bronchitis, diabetes, pulmonary emphysema, COPD, myocardial infarction, and tuberculosis. Nearly all were familiar with diabetes, with 533 (83.3%) mentions, with acute myocardial infarction in second place, with 455 (71.1%) mentions. COPD was recognized by 82 (12.8%) respondents, and 114 (17.8%) respondents were not sure, while 428 (66.9%) respondents were unaware of COPD. Chronic bronchitis was recognized by 257 (40.2%) respondents, 329 (51.4%) were not sure, and 38 (5.9%) were unaware of this disease. Emphysema was recognized by 128 (20%) respondents, 273 (42.7%) were not sure, and 223 (34.8%) were unaware of it. To establish their perception and awareness of COPD, pulmonary emphysema, and chronic bronchitis, participants were asked to associate some characteristics with each disease on a numerical scale (Fig. 1).

In conclusion, our results are consistent with those of the previous literature that show a moderate awareness of chronic bronchitis and pulmonary emphysema, and a low awareness of COPD.^{1,4,5} It should also be pointed out that a high percentage of respondents were “not sure”, since they stated that they thought they had heard of the disease, but had difficulty in identifying it exactly.

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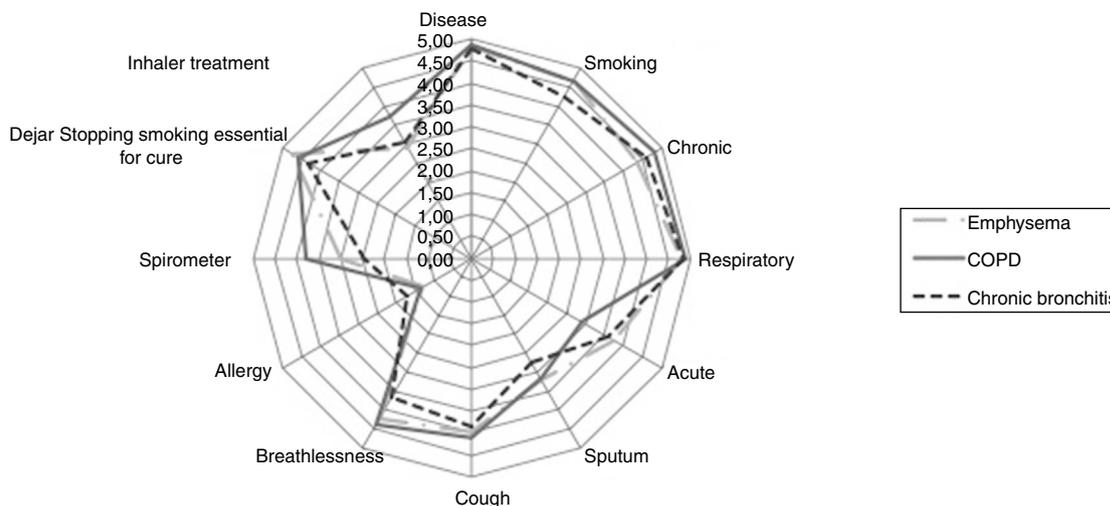


Fig. 1. Attributes of the perception of COPD, chronic bronchitis, and pulmonary emphysema.

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