

NLHEP News

NLHEP Participates in NHLBI Campaign to Increase Awareness of COPD in Its Earliest Stages

by Gretchen Lawrence, BA, RRT, FAARC

On Jan. 17, 2007, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), along with partners that include the NLHEP and the AARC, launched “COPD Learn More Breathe Better” at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Tom Petty, MD, FAARC, chair-emeritus of our organization who has dedicated more than 50 years to increasing COPD awareness, had this to say about the new campaign: “We have a huge challenge ahead, but we also have knowledge and treatment strategies now that can change the course and prognosis of COPD.”

NLHEP’s own COPD awareness campaign began over 10 years ago with the battle cry, “Test Your Lungs. Know Your Numbers.” The NHLBI campaign includes that emphasis on spirometry, with Elizabeth G. Nabel, MD, NHLBI director, noting that “diagnosis is easy, requiring only a simple breathing test in your doctor’s office” to identify COPD and begin effective treatment of symptoms.

NLHEP participated in the 2004 NHLBI Education Strategy Development Workshop and contributed ideas that led to this newly released COPD awareness campaign. In addition, James P. Kiley, PhD, director of lung diseases for the NHLBI, is a liaison from that organization to the NLHEP, where he regularly reports on his group’s activities related to COPD.¹ Following this event, he said, “Today, the NHLBI, in collabora-

tion with more than 20 partners, launched the first of its kind national awareness program to focus on helping people with COPD. It is important that we inform the public about the seriousness of this rising lung disease and ask everyone with a history of smoking and experiencing shortness of breath to speak with their health provider about COPD. Early detection can lead to effective treatment, so it is important to learn more, breathe better.”

Dennis E. Doherty, MD, chair of NLHEP, knows a great deal about the power of public awareness campaigns, based on the six-year COPD awareness media tour he did with TV’s Loni Anderson (whose mother and father both expired from COPD at a young age) — creating 900 million “impressions” (as measured by each time a person heard, saw, or read about COPD as a result of this campaign). “There is a great need to raise public awareness, to educate patients to recognize early symptoms of COPD and ask their health care provider to do a spirometry test. People know their blood pressure and cholesterol numbers — but they often do not know their lung numbers.”

NLHEP is proud to be a partner in this important campaign, and along with the NHLBI, we will provide the public with information on COPD to help raise awareness. In addition, NLHEP also wants to provide respiratory therapists with the tools that will help them take care of their COPD patients as well as assist them in getting the word out to other health care professionals whom they work with day-to-day in the hospital or home care setting. For tools from the NHLBI, go to www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/copd/campaign-materials/index.htm at www.LearnAboutCOPD.org. For tools from the NLHEP, go to www.nlhep.org or call (972) 910-8555. Let’s work together to find those with COPD and give them all a better quality of life. ■

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REFERENCE

1. Lawrence G. NLHEP News: The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute launches programs for COPD. AARC Times 2004; 28(8):50.



Dennis E. Doherty MD, NLHEP chair, comments at the NHLBI press conference last January.