



Failure to Treat COPD: The Hidden Crisis and Nightingale's Revolution in Maintenance Therapy



COPD TREATMENT: THE PROBLEM

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) continues to be a major health concern affecting millions, yet the story often told omits a critical issue: the healthcare industry's failure to address it effectively from both clinical and cost perspectives. This crisis, while largely invisible, is profoundly impactful, costing billions of dollars annually. The urgency for effective COPD treatment cannot be overstated. Recent studies suggest that the healthcare industry has largely overlooked this pressing need. As a result, many patients aren't receiving the necessary treatment, leading to escalating healthcare costs for preventable exacerbations.

Another layer of complexity in the COPD treatment crisis is the influence of social determinants. Factors such as financial barriers, limited access to care, and even geographical hindrances to pharmacies can significantly impact an individual's ability to receive the necessary medications and support. These barriers often disproportionately affect marginalized communities, further deepening the crisis.

Nightingale Digital Health, a subsidiary of Health Care Originals (HCO), works tirelessly to dismantle these barriers.

We provide not only innovative advancements in monitoring, therapeutic, and wellness support needed for individuals with COPD to thrive but also focus on improving the cost of care by decreasing unnecessary expenditures resulting from avoidable COPD exacerbations.

A large survey of patients with COPD across 19 health plans, including private and Medicare Advantage plans, painted a stark picture of the state of COPD treatment more than a decade ago. According to the study,

66%

of patients in commercial plans were not prescribed any maintenance pharmacotherapy, while

71%

of those covered by Medicare Advantage had the same story to tell.¹ Smoking cessation interventions, the most effective method of slowing COPD progression, were also largely not prioritized, with over 80% of current smokers receiving no intervention.^{1,2} Unfortunately, these results were reaffirmed in a recent study published in 2021, indicating that almost half (48%) of patients with COPD in that population did not receive a COPD maintenance medication.

These figures highlight a glaring issue in COPD treatment: prescribing practices that do not consistently align with the best practice and missed opportunities to ensure medication adherence once appropriate treatments are prescribed. Maintenance therapy with long-acting bronchodilators has been scientifically proven to significantly reduce the incidence of exacerbations and related hospitalizations. The Understanding Potential Long-term Impacts on Function with Tiotropium (UPLIFT) trial showed that Tiotropium reduced the relative risk of exacerbation by 14% compared with a placebo during the four-year study.³ The Towards a Revolution in COPD Health (TORCH) trial found a similar 18% reduction in the rate of exacerbations requiring hospitalization for those treated with salmeterol.⁴ Yet, despite this evidence, most patients still are not receiving this crucial treatment.



"WITH NIGHTINGALE, COPD PATIENTS ARE MORE THAN NUMBERS"

What's more, the financial impact of this gap in best practices for the care of individuals with COPD is enormous. A study by Dalal and colleagues found that in 2006, the direct medical and pharmacy costs associated with COPD amounted to a staggering \$15.7 billion. ⁵ When considering the impact of comorbidities, this figure jumps to over \$75 billion, as per estimates by Blanchette and colleagues.⁶

That is approximately 500% higher than the direct medical costs that health plans and Medicare/Medicaid typically account for.

This discrepancy underscores a startling gap in understanding the true costs related to inadequate pharmacologic treatment of COPD, not even considering other gaps in care for individuals with COPD such as poor engagement with smoking cessation programs. Multiple subsequent articles in the literature confirm this finding: the cost of poorly or unmanaged COPD is staggering, and growing. Given that treatment adherence has a meaningful impact on preventing exacerbations, a focus on improving prescribing practices and supporting medication adherence is critical as our national health expenditures become increasingly unsustainable.

In the face of these systemic shortcomings, there's an immediate need for innovative and effective solutions. This is where Nightingale Digital Health excels. We bridge the gap in COPD care by offering cutting-edge, remote respiratory therapy and ADAMM, a wireless lung monitor.

With Nightingale, patients understand the need for therapy and are empowered to ask for it and adhere to it. Within 6 months, exacerbations, even in those who had monthly exacerbations before Nightingale, are reduced and/or eliminated.

Nightingale's outcomes meet the standard of clinically efficacious care according to the standards set by the American Thoracic Society. Nightingale can help ensure that COPD patients receive the crucial ongoing treatment they need, right from the comfort of their homes.

In a world where COPD treatment is vastly under-resourced and under-utilized, we are determined to flip the narrative. By combining state-of-the-art technology with a human touch, Nightingale Digital Health is striving to make COPD management more accessible, effective, and ultimately, transform patient outcomes. With Nightingale, COPD patients are more than numbers; they're people deserving of a system that works for them.

The fight against COPD requires more than just awareness; it demands action. The current failures in COPD treatment are unacceptable, and Nightingale Digital Health is committed to changing the narrative. It's time to embrace a new era in COPD care, where every patient receives the necessary treatment at the right time.

SOURCES

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