Fact sheet on Chronic Respiratory Diseases in Brazil

What are chronic respiratory diseases?

Chronic respiratory diseases are chronic diseases of the airways, including the nose and sinuses, and other structures of the lung. The major chronic respiratory diseases include asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), allergic rhinitis, occupational lung diseases and pulmonary hypertension. Affected people have difficulties breathing normally and are limited to do full physical activities.

Are chronic respiratory diseases a health problem in Brazil?

Chronic respiratory diseases affect all ages and cause a substantial socioeconomic burden to both individuals and societies. For example in Brazil, 15 million people are affected by asthma, 20 million people have allergic rhinitis and five million Brazilians over the age of 40 have COPD. These statistics reflect that in total almost 1 out of 10 Brazilians is affected by a chronic respiratory disease.

What are the risk factors for chronic respiratory diseases?

The most important risk factors for chronic respiratory diseases are:

- Tobacco smoking
- Indoor air pollution (such as biomass fuels or airco)
- Outdoor pollution
- Allergens (such as pollens, moulds, pet dander and house dust mites in bedding, carpets and stuffed furniture)
- Exposure to occupational risks (such as dust and chemicals)

What is the economic cost for this burden in Brazil?

According to a cost-effectiveness study of a Brazilian programme for severe asthma in Salvador\(^1\), the health related annual costs of one patient with severe asthma is 750 US$ for the Public Health System and 807US$ for the families. This corresponds with almost one third of the median total family annual income.

Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD)

The Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD) is a voluntary alliance of national and international organizations, institutions and agencies committed towards the common goal to improve global lung health. The Alliance is part of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) global work to prevent and control chronic diseases. Because most of the chronic respiratory diseases are under-diagnosed, under-treated and the access to essential medications in many countries is poor, a global effort to improve the diagnosis and the medical care is needed. The Global Alliance improves the coordination between existing governmental and nongovernmental programmes, to avoid duplication of efforts and wasting of resources. Towards its vision, a world where all people can breathe freely, the Global Alliance was officially launched on 28 March 2006 in Beijing, People’s Republic of China.

Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases - Brazil (GARD Brazil)

Many cities of various Brazilian regions have developed programmes that provide health care facilities, education and free medication, but this is still far from available to the majority of the population. Among the Latin American countries, Brazil is a pioneer in creating an Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases at country level. This Alliance gathers Brazilian chronic respiratory disease experts and other health professionals to work towards the common goal of improving lung health, as part of the work and effort of the Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases.

What will GARD Brazil do?

GARD Brazil will act in the country as an interface between the Global Alliance and the Ministry of Health to create a platform for all parties interested in chronic respiratory diseases. Scaling up on the resources available at country level, the Alliance will facilitate the exchange of relevant information related to the burden of chronic respiratory diseases. The Alliance will as well increase the awareness on the impact of lung diseases, and how they can be successfully prevented or treated.

Information about the Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases in Spanish, French and English is available on: www.who.int/respiratory/gard

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