

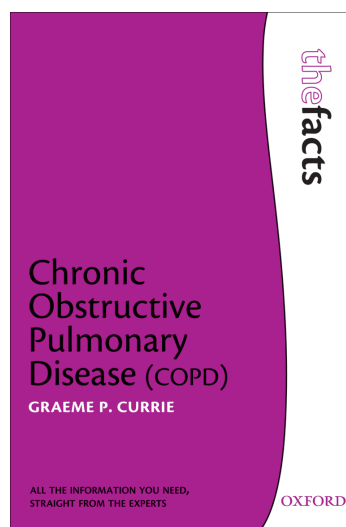
BOOK REVIEW

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Graeme P. Currie

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Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), by Graeme P. Currie, has been published as part of “The Facts” series from Oxford University Press (UK), which is intended to offer practical advice about an illness or a condition in a clear and easy to understand format.

Indeed, COPD is a much less popular subject than diseases such as diabetes, hypertension or coronary artery disease. Its importance and consequences are

probably underestimated by both the general public and health professionals, including, in my opinion, many medical doctors and particularly GPs. In fact, at present, COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the USA and Europe and is expected to become the third leading cause of death throughout the world by 2020, due to the spectacular increase of smoking in developing countries. Recent epidemiological studies, based on spirometry, have established that the prevalence of COPD is as high as 5–10% in the adult general population. COPD kills more than 25,000 people per year in the UK and about 20,000 in France. These figures are expected to increase in the coming years. For all these reasons a didactic book on COPD, such as this one, is highly useful and deserves the interest of the patients, their families and their carers.

The nine chapters of this book are clearly written, well illustrated and easy to follow, even for a non-health professional.

The first chapter explains, in a very simple and informative way, the anatomy and the physiology of the lungs, while chapter 2 goes on to provide the definition of COPD, which has varied in recent years. However, some data on the prevalence of COPD (5–10% in the adult population) could have been added. In chapter 3, the process of diagnosing COPD is described and the importance of spirometry is underlined. This chapter is illustrated by “patient perspectives” (examples of real-life patient experiences). Chapter 4 is dedicated to smoking cessation, which is still the best way to successfully manage COPD, and the use of recent drugs (Zyban/bupropion and Champix/varinicine) is emphasised. Pulmonary rehabilitation, which is currently considered to be one of the major components of COPD management, is described in chapter 5. Chapter 6 refers to the role of drugs in the management of COPD and chapter 7 provides practical and useful recommendations about different types of inhaler devices. Patients and their families will find essential explanations for the daily treatment of COPD within this chapter. Chapter 8 deals with role of oxygen in the advanced stages of COPD and chapter 9 clearly describes exacerbation episodes.

In conclusion, all the important and practical aspects of COPD are covered within this concise book. This extremely didactic book is easy to read and nicely illustrated. In my opinion this book is not only designed for patients, their families and smokers, but will be of interest to various health professionals including GPs, medical students, physiotherapists and nurses. This type of book may help, in some way, to reduce the burden of COPD in the community at large and the author should be congratulated for the quality of this contribution.

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