

My dreams

I have seen patients suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) for many years. Once the disease develops into its late stage, generally there is no effective treatment. Too many patients only come to doctors when they cannot bear the tortures of this devastating disease any more, but that's too late. Some others with early stage COPD don't pay enough attention to it. Once the pulmonary function decreases and no action is taken, severe consequences result.

This conference* has made me think about the COPD patients I have known and treated. I have had a dream about a global effort to help COPD patients everywhere. It would be an organized person to person effort to prevent COPD where we can. For those who are already developing COPD we would conduct a far-reaching initiative to diagnose patients in the very early phase of the disease. We would do our best to help these people avoid the dangerous progression of the disease before they suffer from the debilitating symptoms and the consequent decline of health. This would take place in rich countries as well as poor countries and would locate these patients in the big cities and in the small rural villages.

My second dream is that lung doctors like me and my colleagues will work closely with GPs and primary care doctors as well as other health care professionals and patients from all the communities of the world in this quest to help COPD patients and prevent others from developing COPD. Only by working together can we accomplish the great task of monitoring patients at risk for COPD and detecting the onset of the disease. Then, working with all our colleagues and our patients, we can use the best techniques to diagnose COPD and provide the medicines needed to benefit the patients. I believe that we can all work together to make these dreams come true!

Acknowledgements

*At the end of the World Conference of COPD Patient Organizations held in Shanghai, China, in November of 2011, Monica Fletcher, RN, the Chair of the European Lung Foundation, chaired a panel discussion of COPD experts from throughout the world. She challenged each of the participants to talk about what the meeting had meant to them and how they hoped that it would influence what they would work for upon their return home. Prof. Nanshan Zhong's remarks expressed the sentiments that most deeply affected the attendees from all walks of health care and from all parts of the world. Dr. Alfred Loh, the CEO of the World Organization of Family Doctors applauded Prof. Zhong's dreams. His wish was that he could mobilize his 128 member organization of GPs to take up the challenge that Prof. Zhong described. Dr. Lawrence Grouse adapted this essay from Prof. Zhong's remarks at the World Conference.

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