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To help provide nurses and our patients with the extra support they need, the Association of Respiratory Nurse Specialists (ARNS) and the British Lung Foundation (BLF) have teamed up to develop a new, comprehensive chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) self-management pack. The pack includes a self-management plan and exercise handbook.

Self-management plays an integral part in preserving most COPD patients' sense of autonomy and contributes to their quality of life. However, it can be hard for nurses to help patients understand just how important self-management is. I have had patients who have found it challenging to understand how to take their inhalers correctly or recognise when they are deteriorating.

The role of a community respiratory service is to provide expert care to those living with long-term chronic respiratory conditions including COPD. The condition claims around 30,000 lives each year and is one of this country's biggest killers. COPD encompasses a number of conditions including chronic bronchitis and emphysema, and is characterised by airflow obstruction or limitation, with the air sacs in the lungs (alveoli) becoming damaged and the airways (bronchi)

Providing COPD patients with a passport for health

becoming inflamed. Although the progressive damage seen in the lungs of COPD patients is currently irreversible, diagnosing it early and managing it effectively can slow the progression, helping retain a much higher quality of life for patients.

As nurses we have a duty to provide the best care possible and this doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. Care is not solely about ensuring patients are given the right treatment, such as oxygen therapy, inhalers and other medications — although naturally this is very important. It is also about reducing the number of patients being admitted and readmitted to hospital with an exacerbation. We can do this by supporting them following discharge and educating them by giving them the tools and confidence they need to effectively self-manage their condition.

PASSPORT TO HEALTH

Part of the BLF's COPD self-management pack is a COPD Patient Passport, which provides a summary of the key elements of best practice in COPD care. It ensures patients feel confident that they are doing everything they can and getting the best support possible.

The BLF pack helps with a number of other aspects in a patient's self-management pathway, such as smoking cessation, keeping fit and learning inhaler techniques. It includes advice on getting vaccinated against flu and pneumonia, on eating a healthy diet, and on coping with very warm or cold weather. There is information on the importance of patients being referred to a pulmonary

rehabilitation programme — exercise classes designed to improve muscle strength and lung fitness, as well as educational classes on nutrition, living with COPD and emotional support. It also includes tips about how to remain active after a course comes to an end, and the availability of other targeted exercise classes, such as those offered under the BLF Active programme.

The COPD self-management pack was developed with the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, medical experts and patients across the UK and has been endorsed by the Primary Care Respiratory Society UK. Developing a multidisciplinary pack means that we now have the material we need to provide patient's with the standard of care they deserve.

The self-management plan and exercise handbook can be ordered separately or together so that clinicians can tailor them to the needs of their patients. The packs are available to order from the BLF website or alternatively by telephone on 03000 030 555 or email at sales@blf.org.uk. **JCN**



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