

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Translating New Understanding Into Improved Patient Care

The 32nd RESPIRATORY CARE Journal Conference continues a 21-year tradition of the American Association for Respiratory Care in convening a distinguished faculty of physicians, respiratory therapists, and nurses to review important topics in respiratory care and share their experience and knowledge with respiratory therapists. These conferences are typified by a vigorous collaboration of experts who come together in a spirit of teamwork to generate a rich dialogue and the state-of-the-art reviews such as those that fill the following pages.

What are the dimensions of this teamwork? In temporal sequence, first the American Respiratory Care Foundation partners with the academic respiratory care community to identify a conference theme and chairpersons. We are indebted to the foundation and its “team members” in industry who provide unrestricted funds to support our efforts. The chairpersons then network with academic colleagues to develop the curriculum and a series of high quality lectures, manuscripts, and the discussions that follow each conference presentation. These discussions provide the respiratory care community a “seat in the conference hall” where the experts exchanged their wisdom and debated their views. The final, but perhaps most important step in this sequence of teamwork involves our readership. Practicing physicians, nurses, and respiratory therapists partner with our expert panel to help *translate new understandings* contained in these pages into *improved patient care*. Indeed, the mantra “always consider the patient” reverberated through the discussions in this conference.

The 32nd Journal Conference focused on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), an issue the timeliness and importance of which are emphasized by the rising death rate associated with COPD, the crushing health and economic burdens of this disease, and the many recent advances in management that promise improved outcomes of care.

As per Journal Conference tradition, this meeting assembled an august international faculty, representing both Europe and the United States, including participants from

12 highly regarded health care institutions in eleven of the United States. The conference addressed a wide array of topics, including epidemiology, detection, diagnosis, natural history, prevention, treatment (both restorative and palliative), drug management, and strategies to improve patient care through guideline implementation and self-care. The lectures succinctly defined the state of the art of COPD care and engendered lively discussions. As usual with the Journal Conference, the discussions contain the faculty’s candid interchange and offer unique insights into both the depths and limits of our knowledge of this important disease.

As the conference co-chairs, we are pleased to bring this Journal Conference to your attention. We also wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many individuals and organizations whose teamwork is reflected in this and the following issue of RESPIRATORY CARE. Special appreciation goes to the American Respiratory Care Foundation, the American Association for Respiratory Care, our industry sponsors, and our colleagues on the faculty, whose expertise and craftsmanship are reflected in these pages.

Finally, we wish to dedicate these 2 Journal Conference issues to Gordon L Snider MD, for his landmark contributions to understanding COPD, efforts to improve patients’ lives, and the guidance and mentorship he has provided to so many of us. Although he could not attend the Journal Conference, his wisdom and contributions to medicine can be felt not only in these pages but also in the careers of the discussants.

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