It can be difficult to manage the complex health system of hospitals, insurance coverage and healthcare providers when living with COPD. Caring for someone with COPD is often unpredictable and can sometimes be challenging. COPD flare-ups and emergencies are a possibility.

One in five patients admitted to the hospital with a COPD flare-up is readmitted within 30 days of discharge. Hospitals are now assessed reimbursement penalties in an effort to improve the quality of care and reduce these readmissions.

Being prepared for these events will help reduce the stress and impact on you and your family.
RHA INVITES YOU TO JOIN US

14th Annual Living Better Together COPD Conference

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2017

Registration will open in September for Respiratory Health Association’s annual Living Better Together COPD Conference being held on Thursday, November 16, 2017 at Meridian Banquets & Conference Center in Rolling Meadows, Illinois.

Designed specifically for people living with COPD, their families and caregivers, Living Better Together helps people living with COPD become educated consumers of healthcare as well as effective managers of their disease. Bus transportation from locations throughout Chicagoland will be offered as well as onsite supplemental oxygen for individuals already prescribed and using oxygen.

This year’s keynote panel will focus on COPD flare-ups, which can be scary for both the person living with COPD and his or her caregiver. Knowing what to look for, the next steps and follow-up guidance can help manage the existing flare-up and prevent a future COPD flare-up from occurring.

A panel of experts will offer practical recommendations to event participants on how to best manage and avoid COPD flare-ups.

Breakout sessions and the event exhibit hall will offer additional learning opportunities. For more information, contact Jennifer at (312) 628-0219 or jkustwin@lungchicago.org.

Hike for Lung Health

September 17, 2017
Join us for our multi-charity walk for clean air and lung health. For more information, contact Jamie at (312) 628-0223 or visit LUNGCHICAGO.ORG/HIKE.
The following are strategies to help you better navigate the healthcare system and avoid a COPD hospital readmission:

**Tips to help you navigate the healthcare system:**

1. Speak with your healthcare provider or hospital discharge planner to develop a COPD management plan;
2. Don’t be afraid to ask questions of healthcare providers (review RHA’s publication, “Making the Most of Your Doctor’s Appointment,” on RHA’s website, LUNGCHICAGO.ORG);
3. Identify **supportive services** the person you care for may need following a COPD flare-up;
4. Understand your long-term care health insurance—and don’t forget any applicable veteran’s benefits;
5. Identify a back-up caregiver for additional support or when your primary caregiver might be out of town.

**Tips to avoid hospital readmission:**

1. Review with your doctor the signs and symptoms of a COPD flare-up and discuss which symptoms should trigger a call to the doctor;
2. Review signs and symptoms of a COPD emergency. Talk with your doctor about when to call 911;
3. Review medication use and technique with your healthcare providers;
4. Create personal reminders on how to use proper medication technique/medical devices (i.e. inhalers, nebulizers, etc.);
5. Review your hospital discharge plan with family/caregiver advocate and hospital discharge coordinator;
6. Prepare in advance for possible in-home care following a hospitalization; and,
7. Know what resources are available in advance (for example, the supportive services listed above).

Visit Respiratory Health Association’s online library to find support resources: LUNGCHICAGO.ORG/LIBRARY
COPD NATIONAL ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Recently, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), a branch of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), released its COPD National Action Plan. RHA believes this plan will serve as a springboard to promote policy change that supports the needs of COPD patients and their caregivers, and fosters better communications among healthcare providers, all in an effort to reduce the burden of COPD and improve health outcomes for people living with the disease.

RHA’s COPD initiatives are aligned to support the national plan’s goals:

1. Empower people with COPD, their families, and caregivers to recognize and reduce the burden of COPD;
2. Improve quality of care delivered across healthcare systems;
3. Collect, analyze, report, and disseminate COPD data;
4. Increase and sustain COPD research; and,
5. Turn COPD policy and program recommendations into research and public healthcare actions.

During the plan’s development, RHA was pleased to work with COPD stakeholders across the nation to provide input and feedback.
ASK THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

UNDERSTANDING COPD MEDICATIONS

RHA spoke with Dr. Wilken to address common questions that people living with COPD and their caregivers often have when managing COPD medications.

“How is this medication going to help me?”
COPD medications are important to help people manage their disease.

Medications are used to:
- Prevent and control symptoms (for example, keep you from having flare-ups);
- Reduce the frequency and worsening of COPD symptoms (for example, keep you out of the hospital and emergency department with a COPD flare-up);
- Improve breathing and ability to exercise (for example, help your ability to perform daily activities, like carrying in the groceries or making your bed in the morning).

If, after starting your new medication for COPD, you do not notice any improvements, talk with your doctor about trying a different medication.

“How am I going to pay for this medication?”
It is frustrating to hear your medication is not covered. Typically in January and July, insurance companies update their formularies, which are their listings of covered medications (often after negotiating pricing with medication manufacturers). To check for medication coverage, you can use the customer service number on the back of your insurance card, look online at your insurance company’s preferred drug list and, if you have Medicare Part D, the website medicare.gov/part-d/coverage/part-d-coverage.html.

“How do I use this medication?”
Ensure the pharmacist and doctor review with you the use of your COPD medication, including inhalers. Not all inhalers are alike! Save the inhaler box with directions and the pharmacy phone number. Read the package insert directions for proper medication cleaning and storage. Medication manufacturers also have websites with videos that show how to use the inhaler properly. Or, you can check out the site use-inhalers.com.

“How am I going to fit yet another medication into my daily routine?”
Many new inhalers are dosed once or twice daily and combine more than one medication into the same inhaler to make it easier to fit the medication into your daily routine. Check with your healthcare provider to see which medication is right for you.
RHA staff spoke with Gail Harris, Respiratory Therapist and Pulmonary Rehab leader at John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County, about her COPD patients’ experiences at RHA’s Living Better Together COPD Conference.

“My COPD patients expressed a desire to learn more about their lung disease and attend community events. RHA’s Living Better Together COPD Conference provides lung disease education, supplemental oxygen onsite and assistance with transportation to the conference. People with COPD need to feel safe going places and want to meet others with lung disease to share their experiences. RHA’s Living Better Together COPD Conference makes this a reality for my COPD patients.”

For a detailed list of pulmonary rehab programs in your area, visit LUNGCHICAGO.ORG/COPD.