COPD may impose a substantial burden on an individual. Without proper management and education, COPD can affect all sorts of activities of daily living. Anxiety and depression among COPD patients and their caregivers only aggravate the problem. If you are living with COPD, it is important to recognize any changes in your symptoms and any limitations on your activities to better manage day-to-day living with COPD. The following are recommendations for living well everyday with COPD:

› Recognize the importance of practicing prevention strategies
It is important to monitor changes to physical and mental health when living with COPD. Below is a list of prevention recommendations:

• Get vaccinated (annual influenza and routine pneumonia);
• Wash your hands routinely. Stay home when you are ill;
Registration is now open for Respiratory Health Association’s 16th annual Living Better Together COPD Conference on Thursday, November 21, 2019 at Meridian Banquets and Conference Center in Rolling Meadows, Illinois.

Designed specifically for people living with COPD, their families and caregivers, the Living Better Together COPD Conference helps individuals become educated consumers of healthcare and effective managers of their disease. We offer bus transportation from locations throughout Chicagoland and onsite supplemental oxygen for individuals already prescribed and using oxygen.

This year participants will enjoy a variety of educational sessions, including a moderated keynote panel discussion.

To register for this event, visit resphealth.org/copd-conference and download the registration form or register online.

Please contact Avanthi Chatrathi at 312-229-6186 or achatrathi@resphealth.org with questions.

February 23, 2020 (tentative)
Nearly 4,000 people climb 875 N. Michigan Ave. (formerly the John Hancock Center) to raise funds and awareness for Respiratory Health Association, and now you can join them from wherever you are—even outside the city! Be a virtual climber.

Challenge yourself and use your time over several months at pulmonary rehab to accrue 94 flights or 1,632 stairs just like those who will climb on Feb. 23, 2020. Finisher medals and t-shirts awarded!

For more information, contact Gina at (312) 628-0210 or visit resphealth.org/hustle.
LIVING EVERYDAY WITH COPD CONTINUED

› Prevention strategies continued

• Stop smoking* and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke;
• Review your medication list with your health care providers to ensure the list is current and you know how to properly use your medications;
• Ensure you have a sufficient supply of medication at home, especially during winter;
• Be aware of changes in mental health and communicate any changes to your health care provider and informal caregiver (spouse, child, etc.).

› Monitor symptoms of COPD

People living with COPD should track symptoms and share any changes with a health care provider:

• Please share any increase in coughing or difficulty breathing with your healthcare provider;
• If a new medication is not working for you and not minimizing your symptoms, please tell your health care provider;
• It is always okay to obtain a second opinion.

› Anxiety and depression are common in patients with COPD and their caregivers

Mental health may impact someone’s ability to manage his or her COPD. It is important to be aware of the following:

• Anxiety and depression in COPD patients is associated with increased COPD flare-ups, increased hospitalizations, longer lengths of a hospital stay, and decreased quality of life;
• Be an active part of your care team. Be proactive with your physical AND mental health care;
• Maintain physical activity, especially in fall and winter. Physical activity can have positive benefits on physical health and mental well-being—make sure to talk to health care providers about physical activities you can do indoors or at home.

*If you would like to learn more about smoking cessation, please visit our website at: resphealth.org/quitsmoking
In August 2018, RHA was awarded funding from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's (NHLBI) Learn More Breathe Better Program to launch a pilot study of caregivers’ acceptance of Respiratory Health Association’s COPD Caregiver’s Toolkit.

Findings show that the Toolkit is meeting a need for caregivers. Even though most participating caregivers had at least one year of caregiving experience, a majority of them found the information provided to be relevant to their caregiving duties, highlighting a need for this tool as a supportive resource. Results show that the Toolkit helped caregivers take time to care for themselves. The self-care section helped caregivers gain perspective on their roles and the sacrifices they have made as caregivers, and, importantly, helped them feel comfortable taking time to focus on their emotional and physical health.

RHA plans on distributing the Toolkit more widely, and is developing a user guide to accompany distribution of the Toolkit. RHA also has presented the findings of the study at local and national conferences focused on community health and COPD management.

For a more comprehensive overview of results from this pilot study, please refer to the COPD Caregiver’s Toolkit Full Report: resphealth.org/caregiver-toolkit-report
RHA asked Dr. Han to address questions for women living with COPD.

“What should women know about COPD?”

Women are at equal risk for COPD as men, and in fact some studies suggest women are more susceptible. Women also comprise a higher percentage of individuals with COPD who have never smoked.

Dr. Han stated that while it is certain that more women die of COPD than men in the US, this may be related to lower risk of dying from other things like heart disease, which, may affect men at an earlier age. However, she emphasized that women with COPD may present with greater symptoms than men and may experience more frequent exacerbations.

“How do women know if they should have a COPD screening? When should women be screened for COPD?”

If someone is feeling short of breath with activities or experiencing frequent respiratory infections, regardless of smoking history she should discuss with her physician undergoing a breathing test called “spirometry”.

“What are steps that women can take to manage their COPD?”

There are medications that can help in addition to exercise and life-style management strategies. Patients should talk to their doctor about the most appropriate medications for them and also inquire about whether they would benefit from pulmonary rehabilitation, a formal exercise and disease management program.
If you would like to have upcoming issues of our free Inspiration newsletter delivered to your home, please contact Hannah Garza at 312-628-0207 or hgarza@resphealth.org.

Please feel free to copy and distribute this newsletter. The issue can also be viewed online at resphealth.org/inspiration.

To make a donation to support Respiratory Health Association’s outreach and educational programs for people living with COPD, please contact Anastasia Schriber at (312) 628-0251 or aschriber@resphealth.org.

RHA would like to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Peter Sporn for serving as the Inspiration editor since 2005. This is his last issue as editor, and he will be missed.

RHA staff asked Rosie Riggins, CRTT of AMITA LaGrange, about her pulmonary rehabilitation group and their experiences with RHA’s Living Better Together COPD Conference. The PR group at AMITA LaGrange has been running for 20+ years, and over those years, the PR staff has really gotten to know the patients and their life stories.

The PR group at AMITA LaGrange has continually had a presence at the Living Better Together Conference. One patient states that she “enjoy[s] the COPD Conference because there are always great topics and information to learn...and you are never too old to learn.” Rosie continued that patients love attending the conference because they enjoy meeting other people and PR groups from different cities and talking about their shared experiences.

For a detailed list of pulmonary rehab programs in your area, visit resphealth.org/pulmonary-rehab.