

Preface

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) affects millions of people across the world. Cigarette smoking and/or exposure to other noxious stimuli results in inflammation and damage to the airways and lung parenchyma, resulting in expiratory flow limitation. COPD is not only a major burden to our patients but is also costly and results in billions of dollars of direct and indirect costs annually. In recent years and with advancement of science, our understanding of COPD improved significantly. Current management guidelines consider COPD as a “...preventable and treatable...” condition. Recent studies clearly indicate that available pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions may improve various clinical outcomes in patients with COPD.

This book was written to help clinicians who take care of patients with COPD including primary care providers and specialists. Primary care providers are in the forefront of delivering care to patients and play a vital role in managing various chronic diseases including COPD. A clear example of the role of primary care providers in improving patient care is the fight against atherosclerotic cardiac diseases. Every primary care provider is well aware of the long-term effects of hypertension and hypercholesterolemia. Even though both diseases are asymptomatic in overwhelming majority of the cases, primary care providers routinely check both blood pressure and cholesterol levels and treat their patients according to evidence-based guidelines in the hope to prevent cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. Indisputably, this approach resulted in decline in cardiovascular-related mortality. Unfortunately this is not the case with COPD, which remains undiagnosed and therefore untreated in more than 50% of the patients, and where mortality rose in last few decades. We hope that this book will help improve knowledge of the healthcare community caring for COPD patients and may improve its diagnosis and appropriate management.

With this goal in mind, a group of experts in this field took the task of developing this publication focusing on essential issues that all providers should be aware of. The first four chapters of the book cover major points about the systemic nature of COPD, the clinical and physiological assessments, and the outcome measures and prognostic markers. In the following section, various pharmacologic and non-pharmacological management strategies are reviewed based on available evidence. The final sections outline the non-pulmonary effects of COPD and their management. The authors of the book hope that it will provide an easy to read guide and thus improve management and care of patients with COPD.

We would like to thank all the contributors for their selfless effort in authoring a publication comprehensive and yet targeted to a very important audience. We also would like to thank Mr. Richard Lansing and Ms. Amanda Quinn from Springer for their assistance in the publication of this work. Last but not least, we would like to thank our wives and families for their support, patience, and understanding.

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