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Title: Characterisation of patients with COPD in Scotland

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Body: Background: Characteristics and prevalence of the COPD population vary across the globe. Inequality in disease burden between the sexes has emerged as an important trend. Aim: To describe the population diagnosed with COPD in NHS Forth Valley. Methods: Data were obtained from 46 practices in NHS Forth Valley via an electronic interface with practice clinical software. Microsoft SQL® queries were designed to isolate patient characteristics, including age, sex, smoking status, and FEV₁ % predicted. Data were analysed with Minitab® 16 using 2-sample t-tests and binomial proportion confidence intervals. Results: 4611 patients were prescribed therapy for COPD in 2009; approximately half (48.0%) were men. The mean age of the cohort was higher for men versus women (69.3 ± 10.8 years v. 68.2 ± 11.3 years, p=0.001). Overall COPD prevalence was similar between men and women. Peak prevalence (per 10,000 population) for men was reached at age 80 – 89 years (903.3), but for women occurred earlier at 70 – 79 years (633.8). Compared to men, prevalence rates were significantly higher in women at younger ages (<60 years) and lower at older ages (≥70 years) (Figure 1). Women had a higher FEV₁ % predicted (63.0 ± 17.4% v. 59.2 ± 18.2%, p<0.001), but were more likely to be current smokers (p<0.001). Conclusions: Despite similar overall prevalence, female COPD patients in NHS Forth Valley are younger with less advanced disease, but higher smoking rates than their male counterparts.