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Title: A choice for MRC or CAT largely affects GOLD classification

Dr. Alex 28168 van 't Hul a.vanthul@long.umcn.nl [1], Mr. Remco 28169 Djamin djaminr@amphia.nl MD [1] and RN. Marlou 28170 Keim mkeim@amphia.nl [1]. [1] Pulmonary Medicine, Amphia Ziekenhuis, Breda, Netherlands .

Body: Introduction: In the recently updated GOLD guidelines, classification of disease severity is based on airway obstruction, exacerbation frequency and symptom severity. Symptom severity may be built on either the MRC dyspnoea score or the COPD assessment test (CAT). Since the CAT does not only contain questions regarding dyspnoea severity, a difference in outcome is possible. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to evaluate the effect of a choice for MRC or CAT to score symptom severity, on GOLD classification. Methods and materials: In patients referred to the pulmonologist between April and December 2012, measurements were performed enabling the classification of disease severity according to the new GOLD guidelines. Spirometry was performed to measure airway obstruction, annual exacerbation rate was recorded and symptom severity was assessed by MRC and CAT. Results: Data were collected in 125 patients enrolled in an outpatient based Care Path for patients with COPD. Table 1 gives the patient characteristics. Outcome with respect to GOLD classification based on MRC or CAT are provided in Table 2. The use of the CAT instead of MRC leads to significantly larger proportions of patients with worse disease classification, i.e. B and D in stead of A and C. Conclusion: Gold classification is largely affected by a choice for MRC or CAT to score symptom severity.

Table 1. Patient Characteristics

Age (yrs.)	64±10
Gender (M/F)	53%/47%
BMI (Kg/m2)	25.6±5.2
GOLDold (I/II/III/IV)	24%/43%/26%/7%
MRC (0/I/II/III/IV/V)	3%/22%/25%/25%/12%/13%
CAT (points)	17.7±7.2
CCQ (points)	2.2±1.2

Table 2. GOLD classification based on MRC or CAT

GOLD class	based on MRC	based on CAT
A	33%	10%
B	18%	40%
C	16%	2%
D	33%	48%

Data are provided as mean±sd