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Title: Association of patient-perceived COPD symptoms & activity limitations with comorbidities: The "COPD language" study

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Body: Background: Comorbidities are common in COPD patients and may impact patient-perceived symptoms and disease management. Objectives: To evaluate the association of the words and phrases most frequently used by patients to express COPD symptoms and activity limitations with comorbidities. Methods: The "COPD Language" study (NCT01219946) was a cross-sectional survey of stable COPD patients under LAMA/LABA±ICS treatment. Investigators and patients chose words describing COPD symptoms and activity limitations from 2 identical lists. Results: Of the 700 patients enrolled, 72% had ≥1 comorbidity, with hypertension(HTN)/diabetes being the most prevalent (57%/20% respectively). The words and phrases most frequently chosen by patients to describe COPD symptoms were "cough" (39%), "shortness of breath" (34%), "phlegm" (32%) and "chest sounds" (24%), whereas "walking uphill" (62%), "stair climbing" (59%), "brisk walking" (48%) and "can't do what I want" (22%) most commonly described activity limitations. Positive associations were found for "shortness of breath" with heart failure (HF; p=0.012); "walking uphill" with HTN (p<0.001) and depression (p=0.022); "stair climbing" with HTN (p<0.001), HF (p=0.012), peripheral artery disease (PAD; p=0.016) & bronchiectasis (p=0.021); "brisk walking" with HTN (p=0.005); and "can't do what I want" with HTN (p<0.001), diabetes (p=0.002), HF (p=0.047), PAD (p<0.001) & bronchiectasis (p=0.010). Conclusions: Significant associations were found between patient comorbidities and certain patient-perceived COPD symptoms and activity limitations, implying that clinical presentation is not COPD-specific and could be attributed to comorbidities as well.