



Research Article

COPD burden and healthcare management across four middle-income countries within the Breathe Well research programme: a descriptive study

Alexander d'Elia,^{1,2} Rachel E Jordan,^{2*} KK Cheng,² Chunhua Chi,³ Jaime Correia-de-Sousa,^{4,5} Andy P Dickens,^{2,6} Alexandra Enocson,² Amanda Farley,² Nicola Gale,⁷ Kate Jolly,² Sue Jowett,² Mariam Maglakelidze,^{8,9} Tamaz Maglakelidze,^{8,10} Sonia Maria Martins,¹¹ Zihan Pan,³ Alice Sitch,^{2,12} Katarina Stavrić,¹³ Alice Turner,² Siân Williams⁴ and Peymane Adab²

¹Department of Public Health, Policy and Systems, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

²Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

³Department of General Practice, Peking University First Hospital, Beijing, China

⁴International Primary Care Respiratory Group, Edinburgh, UK

⁵Life and Health Sciences Research Institute (ICVS), School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal; ICVS/3B's, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães, Portugal

⁶Observational and Pragmatic Research Institute, Midview City, Singapore

⁷Health Services Management Centre, School of Social Policy, College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

⁸Georgian Respiratory Association, Tbilisi, Georgia

⁹Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy, Tbilisi, Georgia

¹⁰Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

¹¹Family Medicine, ABC Medical School, Sao Paulo, Brazil

¹²NIHR Birmingham Biomedical Research Centre, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

¹³Center for Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Skopje, North Macedonia

*Corresponding author r.e.jordan@bham.ac.uk

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Plain language summary

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Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a common cause of lung disease across the world which is mainly caused by cigarette smoking and from breathing polluted air. As chronic obstructive pulmonary disease typically is a lifelong condition and affects many parts of daily life, effective treatment requires a strong healthcare system. This includes preventing the development of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in the first place, for example through reducing smoking rates, diagnosing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in those affected and providing the right treatment at a cost acceptable to patients with different circumstances.

The Breathe Well programme was a collaboration between researchers from four middle-income countries: Brazil, China, Georgia and North Macedonia, with the aim to learn from each other and improve chronic obstructive pulmonary disease management. As part of this programme, this review was carried out to summarise the needs of the different care systems, find common grounds for research and guide the research questions.

From online information searches and information provided by the researchers from respective countries, we produced an overview of the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease care in the four included countries. While national contexts are vastly different, there are some common barriers to effective care. For example, there appears to be a shared shortage of qualified medical professionals with expertise in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease management. Health systems focus excessively on specialised hospital care over primary care, which has implications for cost and geographic access. All countries included would likely benefit from focusing on preventing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, through reducing smoking rates and improving air quality. We defined a series of research questions on these topics which were subsequently prioritised, planned and delivered successfully.