

PATIENTS IN FOCUS:
COPD
treatment and
perceptions

Phreesia

Life
Sciences

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Executive summary

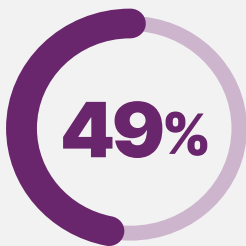
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) afflicts millions of patients worldwide, and while there are a range of medications to manage the inflammatory lung condition, treatment approaches have not fundamentally changed over the past couple of decades.

Therapy remains heavily dependent on bronchodilators to open the airways and inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) to tackle underlying inflammation in the lungs. However, patients with COPD still suffer exacerbations—breakthrough attacks when breathing and coughing symptoms suddenly get worse—that have a deleterious effect on their quality of life.¹

COPD is a progressive condition that can trouble patients over many years, and with 49% of patients reporting that its symptoms affect their daily life at least 24 days out of the month, it's unsurprising that there is strong interest in trying new therapies. But patients largely rely on healthcare providers to make treatment decisions, and many of them are unhappy with the quantity and quality of exchanges they have with their doctor about their condition.

Survey data collected through Phreesia's PatientInsights platform between September and October 2021 from 1,994 patients diagnosed with or treated for COPD as they checked in for their doctors' appointments confirms that patients want to have better discussions with their providers about COPD—from symptom management, new treatment options and the cost of medication.

This report explores the impact of inadequate COPD control, as well as how healthcare professionals can improve their communication with patients about COPD and encourage the optimal use of management medications.



Of patients report that COPD symptoms affect their daily life at least 24 days out of the month



Introduction

COPD, an umbrella term for a group of lung conditions that include emphysema and chronic bronchitis, is one of the most common chronic diseases, affecting about 16 million adults in the U.S., according to the American Lung Association.

It is also a highly underdiagnosed disease—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 50% of adults with low pulmonary function are not aware that they have it—as well as one of the deadliest, ranking as the fourth-leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2018.²

Under current clinical guidance,³ short-acting bronchodilators are used as rescue therapies to treat COPD exacerbations, while maintenance drugs are used to reduce the chances of those exacerbations occurring in patients with more advanced disease.

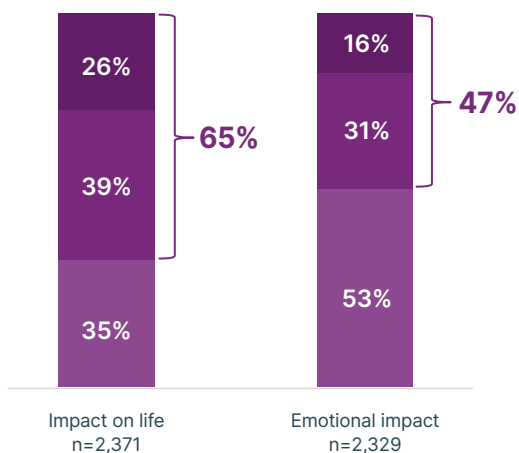
However, while around three-quarters of surveyed patients have tried rescue therapies (77%) and maintenance medications (72%), it's clear from survey results that many patients have not found the optimal drug to treat their condition.

Two-thirds of surveyed patients reported that COPD still has a substantial impact on their everyday life, while almost half said they suffer moderate-to-great impairment of their emotional well-being.

The American Lung Association notes that most COPD patients experience occasional feelings of sadness, fear and worry related to their condition, and in some cases, those feelings can lead to deeper anxiety and depression.⁴

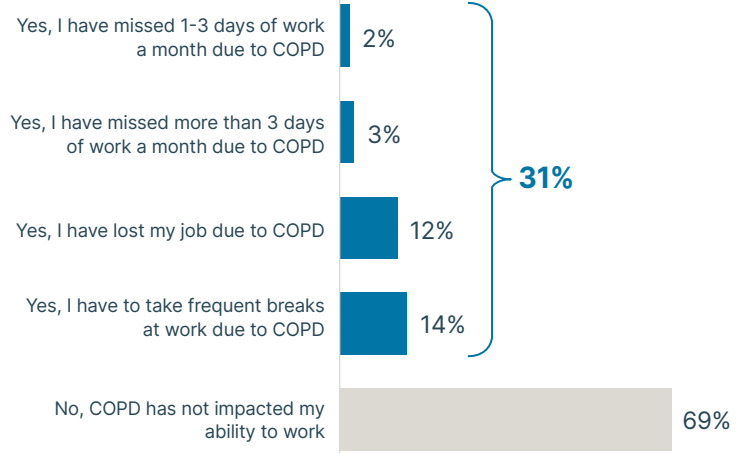
How much does COPD impact your everyday life/emotional health?

■ Great impact ■ Moderate impact ■ Little impact



Has COPD impacted your ability to work? Please check all that apply.

n=1,716



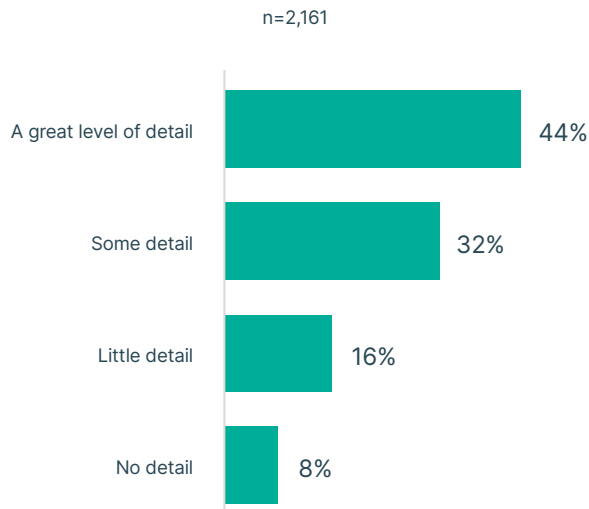
Overall, 49% said their symptoms affect them 24 to 30 days out of each month, and nearly 4 out of 5 (78%) patients have been experiencing COPD symptoms for at least three years. Nearly 1 in 3 patients (31%) reported that the disease has affected their ability to work, forcing them to take time off or to take frequent breaks at work. In 12% of cases, COPD has caused patients to lose their job.

COPD's ongoing impact on patients' daily lives, even when they follow recommended treatments, suggests that many patients haven't yet found the optimal therapy to meet their needs.

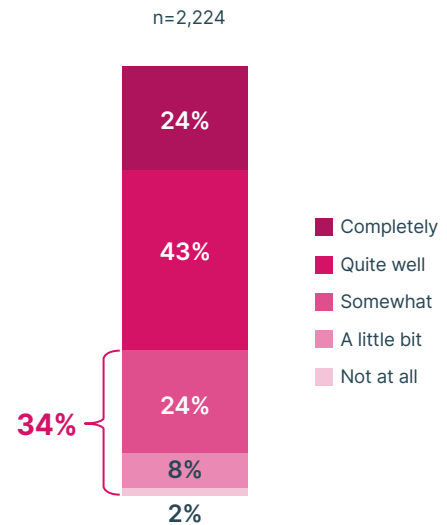
Encouraging doctor-patient dialogue

One potential reason is that patients don't always discuss their illness effectively with their doctors. Only about 4 in 10 (44%) surveyed patients reported having detailed conversations with their doctor about their COPD symptoms, and about one-third (34%) feel they don't fully understand their condition, further hindering productive patient-provider discussions.

How much detail do you use to describe your COPD symptoms to your doctors?



How well do you feel you understand COPD?



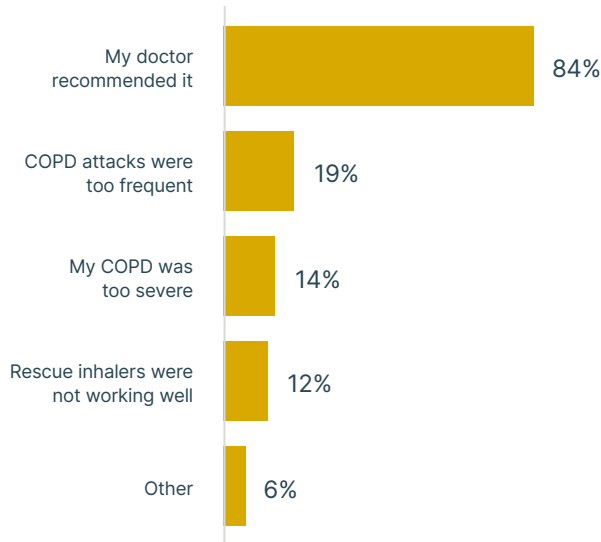
That's a disappointing finding because it means that patients are missing opportunities to get treatment recommendations, as well as to have meaningful discussions with their care team about the importance of warding off COPD exacerbations that can further damage their lungs and contribute to disease progression.

And while it's a given that patients with COPD often may have to switch between therapies to maintain control of their condition, it's also true that switching from one therapy to another—if not accompanied by good advice and support—may be associated with poor clinical outcomes, emphasizing once again the importance of effective dialogue between patients and their doctors.⁵



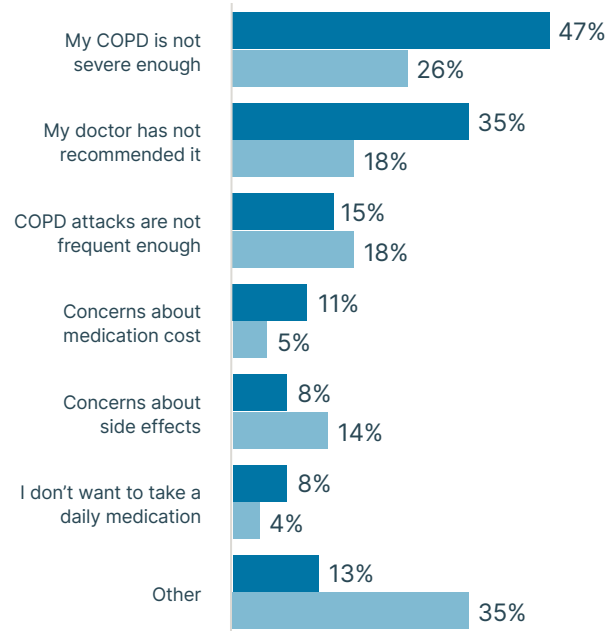
Why did you start maintenance medication? Please check all that apply.

Among patients who have tried maintenance medications, n=1,655



Why aren't you on a maintenance medication now?

■ Patients who have not tried maintenance medications n=196
 ■ Patients who have tried maintenance medications n=384



The good news is that there is strong interest among patients in new maintenance medications, opening up opportunities to encourage greater adoption of this type of treatment and improve both the management of COPD and patient satisfaction.

All told, 84% of surveyed patients who decided to start taking a COPD maintenance medication did so because their doctor recommended it, far greater than the percentage of patients who started taking maintenance drugs because they were dissatisfied with their rescue therapy (12%).

Conversely, 25% of patients who aren't taking a maintenance medication don't do so because their doctor hasn't recommended it. The only more common reason patients gave for not taking maintenance drugs was their perception that their COPD was not severe enough to warrant daily treatment, cited by 33% of those surveyed. Both of those choices could be addressed by encouraging better patient-doctor dialogue.

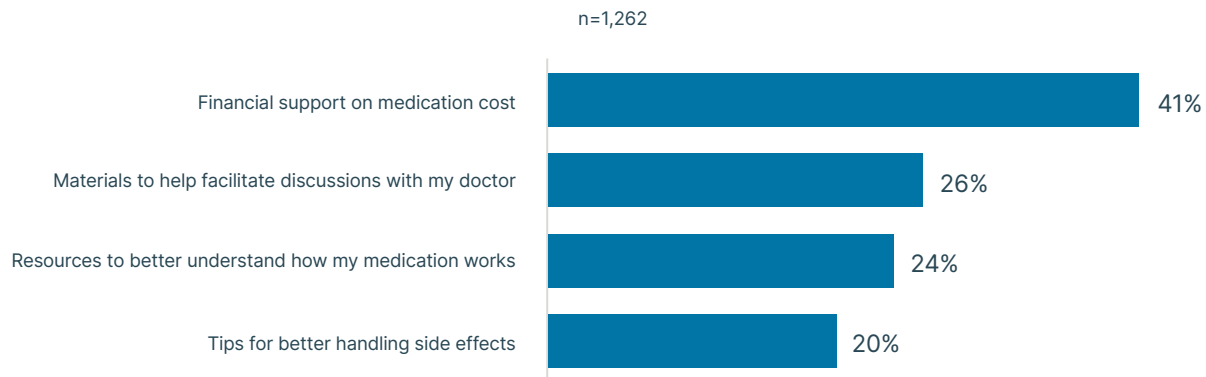
Aiding care conversations

So how can patient-provider discussions be improved? When asked what resources would be most helpful for improving management of their COPD, 26% of surveyed patients said they would value materials that helped facilitate discussions with their doctor, and a similar percentage (24%) said they would appreciate resources that helped them better understand how their COPD medications work.

Delivering these resources to patients at the point of care ensures they are close at hand and top of mind right before patients see their doctor. Especially given patients' strong reliance on their physician's advice, educational materials that can empower them to take more active control of their COPD and understand the rationale for their doctor's treatment recommendations are vital.

It's also notable that patients' most-requested COPD-management resource, noted by 41% of respondents, was information on financial support to cover medication costs, suggesting that COPD has a significant economic impact on their daily life. Offering that assistance to patients at the point of care can assuage their financial concerns in the moments around key care decisions and set them up for successful ongoing treatment.

What kind of resources about COPD care would be helpful to you? Please check all that apply.



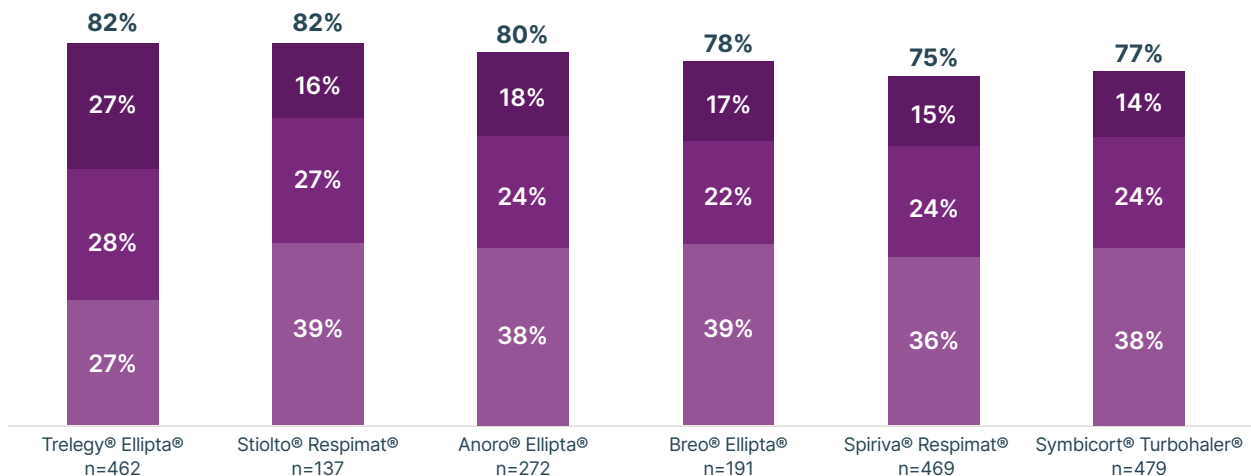
Improving adherence

Equipping patients with relevant support resources can also potentially help improve their experience with brands they currently use. While patients are generally satisfied with their treatments, only 55% of patients or less are very or completely satisfied with their COPD medications.

How satisfied are you with these COPD medications?

Among those on treatment

■ Completely satisfied ■ Very satisfied ■ Somewhat satisfied



The survey also revealed that while many patients have tried the best-known drugs—Boehringer Ingelheim’s LAMA, Spiriva Respimat; GlaxoSmithKline’s triple LABA/LAMA/ICS drug, Trelegy Ellipta; and AstraZeneca’s LABA/ICS combination, Symbicort Turbuhaler—a large proportion of patients subsequently abandoned them.

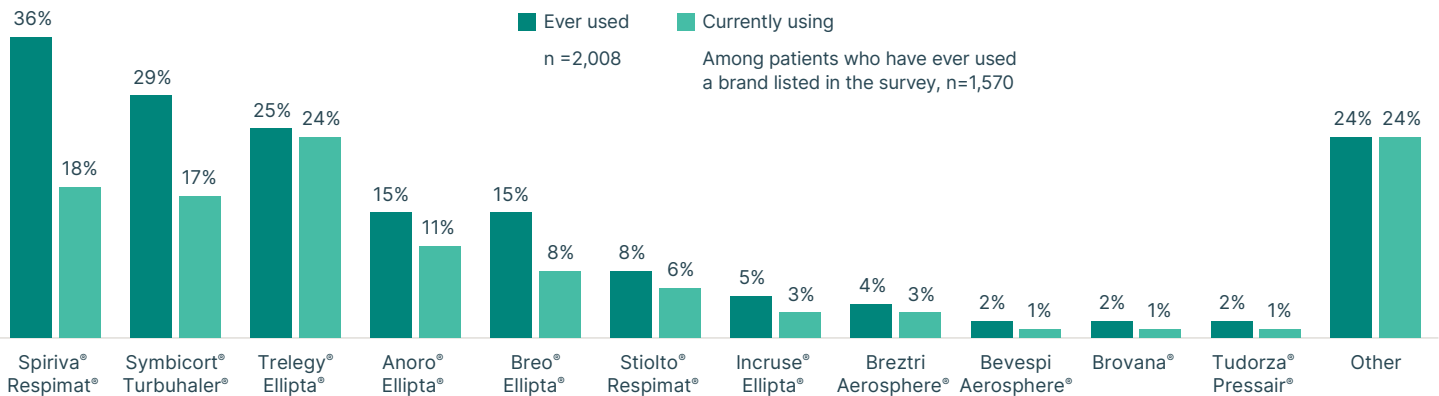
For example, while 36% of respondents previously had used Spiriva Respimat, only 18% are still doing so, and there was a similar usage decline for Symbicort Turbuhaler, from 29% to 17%. Interestingly, there was less attrition with Trelegy Ellipta—25% of patients had used it in the past, and current usage remains at 24%.

While there are a number of potential reasons for patients to discontinue medication, missed doses—which contribute to suboptimal treatment—may play a role. Approximately 1 in 3 patients (32%) who had been taking COPD maintenance medications in the past three months missed doses during that period, emphasizing the importance of continuously following up with support throughout a patient’s healthcare journey.

Additionally, cost plays a role in some patients discontinuing therapy. Some 14% of patients who had taken a maintenance medication but weren’t currently on one attributed stopping to concerns about medication cost, once again highlighting the importance of delivering support resources at the point of care.



What medications have you ever used/are you currently using to treat your COPD? Please check all that apply.





Recommendations:



Empower patients with educational materials that help them understand their COPD and how their medications work



Prepare patients to engage in shared decision-making with their doctor by reaching them at the point of care with discussion guides and other resources that help describe their symptoms



Offer patients clinical support that boosts their medication adherence, such as tips on anticipating and managing COPD side effects



Provide resources that help patients understand their financial-assistance options for COPD medications, whether they are uninsured or covered by private or public health insurance



Encourage doctors to emphasize the value of COPD maintenance medications to clinically appropriate patients

About Phreesia Life Sciences

Phreesia empowers life sciences companies to connect meaningfully with clinically relevant patients, delivering personalized health content in a one-to-one setting. Our PatientConnect offering identifies and motivates the right patients to initiate meaningful brand conversations, and our PatientInsights product enables our clients to better understand key patient populations.

Phreesia meets patients where they are, both virtually and in-person, and reaches them at multiple touchpoints throughout their healthcare journey.

To learn more about Phreesia Life Sciences, visit lifesciences.phreesia.com.

End notes

- 1 "[Pharmacological treatment and current controversies in COPD](#)," F1000Research, 2019.
- 2 "[Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](#)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 9, 2021.
- 3 "[Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, 2019 Report](#)," Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease, 2019.
- 4 "[COPD and Emotional Health](#)," American Lung Association, March 5, 2021.
- 5 "[Switching treatments in COPD: implications for costs and treatment adherence](#)," International Journal of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Dec. 3, 2015.
- 6 "[Prospects for COPD treatment](#)," Current Opinion in Pharmacology, February 2021.

**A previous version of this report indicated lower-than-actual patient satisfaction with COPD brands. This version has been updated to reflect the correct statistics*

