



International Union Against  
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease  
*Health solutions for the poor*

## PRESS RELEASE



Forum of  
International  
Respiratory  
Societies

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## WORLD COPD DAY: 20 November 2013: “It’s not too late”

### Respiratory Diseases in the World: Realities of Today -- Opportunities for Tomorrow

Paris, France / 20 November 2013 -- This year’s World COPD day features the theme “It’s not too late” emphasising that even those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can take steps to improve their lung health. In keeping with this message, the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is today launching its new report on “Respiratory Diseases in the World: Realities of Today -- Opportunities for Tomorrow”.

The report summarises the global impact of the five main respiratory diseases -- COPD, asthma, respiratory infections, tuberculosis (TB) and lung cancer. Combined they represent an immense burden of suffering, as well as a leading cause of death and disability. They include both acute and chronic, infectious and non-communicable diseases.

“It’s not too late is a message that applies not only to individual efforts, but also to global efforts to tackle respiratory diseases and reduce the burden they create”, says Dr E Jane Carter, President of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union). “This report will be useful for politicians, health policy-makers, and health care personnel around the world to help them advocate for adequate funding to develop preventive and curative measures for all these diseases. It will also help broader audiences understand how these diseases affect the most vulnerable organ of the human body: the lung”.

Some of the key issues highlighted in the report are:

- **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)** affects more than 200 million people and is the fourth leading cause of death in the world.
- **Asthma** affects about 235 million people worldwide, is one of the most frequent reasons for hospital admissions among children, and leads to approximately 180,000 deaths each year.
- **Respiratory infections** account for over 4 million deaths annually, including 1.3 million children under 5, and are the leading cause of death in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Tuberculosis (TB)** kills around 1.4 million people with about 8.7 million new cases annually.

- **Lung cancer** is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the world, accounting for 13% of the total reported cancers and affecting over 1.6 million people annually.

“Lung health is a vital health indicator, but most people do not pay attention to their lungs until they become ill. The Union advocates for greater awareness of the need for lung health – and is especially involved in promoting tobacco control. Tobacco is the leading risk factor for every lung disease, as well as a host of other diseases, and any plan to advance must address this issue”, says José Luis Castro, Interim Executive Director of The Union.

“The Union is proud to join forces with the other international respiratory societies in FIRS to make sure that that global health agenda includes respiratory diseases”, said Dr Carter.

“Respiratory Diseases in the World – Realities of Today, Opportunities for Tomorrow” may be downloaded at no charge from The Union website at [www.theunion.org](http://www.theunion.org)

### **About FIRS**

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is an organization that represents all major respiratory societies worldwide working together to improve lung health globally: American Thoracic Society, American College of Chest Physicians, Asociación Latinoamericana de Tórax, Asia Pacific Society of Respiratory, European Respiratory Society, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), Pan African Thoracic Society.

### **About The Union**

The mission of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) is to bring innovation, expertise, solutions and support to address health challenges in low- and middle income populations. With nearly 15,000 members and subscribers from 150 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and offices in the Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and South-East Asia regions, its scientific departments focus on tuberculosis and HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, tobacco control and research.

<sup>1</sup>Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS). Respiratory diseases in the world. Realities of Today – Opportunities for Tomorrow. European Respiratory Society, Sheffield, UK, 2013.