



## Editorial

## World Lung Day<sup>☆</sup>

## Día mundial del pulmón

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The Forum of International Respiratory Societies is better known by the acronym FIRS. FIRS is an association of the most important global health institutions dedicated to the advocacy of respiratory health. It was formed in 2001, and brings together more than 70 000 health professionals throughout the world who devote their lives to the prevention, control, diagnosis, and treatment of respiratory diseases.<sup>1</sup>

On September 25, 2017, the FIRS will celebrate “World Lung Day”. The main aim of this event is to raise awareness among the general public and also managers of public and private health systems of the immense global health problem generated by respiratory diseases: every year more than 4 million people die prematurely due to chronic respiratory diseases.<sup>2</sup> Five respiratory diseases are responsible for this high mortality: COPD, asthma, lower respiratory infections, tuberculosis, and lung cancer.<sup>2,3</sup> The first and last are caused mainly by the active and passive consumption of tobacco, although other causes have also been described: exposure to biomass fuel, fumes from car engines, radon, asbestos, and other known carcinogens. Although lower respiratory infections and tuberculosis are caused by well-defined etiological agents, the course and prognosis of these diseases are affected by voluntary or involuntary exposure to these contaminants. The disease course of asthma is similarly modulated by exposure to these substances.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that today, more than 2 billion people are exposed to toxic pollutants in the home, more than 1 billion are exposed to air pollution outside the home, and 1 billion are exposed to tobacco smoke.<sup>5</sup> It is imperative to raise awareness of this among all stakeholders, including health and non-health workers, health managers and politicians, journalists, and associations of patients, so that together we can demand that decisions be made to ultimately control exposure to environmental tobacco

smoke and other pollutants. This would contribute to a significant improvement in global respiratory health.

Other respiratory problems also represent a significant health burden. Over 100 million individuals have sleep-disordered breathing, around 1% of the world's population lives with pulmonary hypertension, and more than 50 million individuals have occupational lung diseases and are subjected to the deleterious effects of unhealthy exposure in the workplace.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, climate change is contributing to a significant increase in many of these respiratory diseases.<sup>7</sup>

To reduce the prevalence of lung diseases and improve global respiratory health, 8 important actions must be implemented:

1. The general public and the authorities must be made more aware of respiratory health. It is essential that all stakeholders know that respiratory diseases in childhood can have negative consequences on the health of adults.
2. The use of all tobacco products must be reduced and eliminated. Key to this is providing full support for the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control developed by the WHO.
3. WHO standards, at the very least, must be adopted to reduce air pollution in the environment, at home and in the workplace in all countries.
4. Universal access to quality health care must be promoted. Essential medications and vaccination with the newest forms of immunization should be provided universally and free of cost to children and adults.
5. The early diagnosis of respiratory diseases must be improved by providing the necessary tools for the prompt detection of respiratory processes at an early age. Facilitating the interpretation of these tools with studies published in journals and at congresses will be a key aspect of this process.
6. The knowledge and skills of health professionals in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of respiratory diseases must be improved by means of continuous professional development programs run by the different societies that make up the FIRS, the WHO, and other governmental or non-governmental organizations.

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7. Standardized monitoring of the prevalence, severity and treatment of respiratory diseases must be implemented. In this way, the right strategies can be put in place nationally, or by the WHO or other organizations qualified for monitoring these processes.
8. Research into the development of programs, therapies and strategies to improve the prevention and treatment of respiratory diseases must increase.

In summary, the FIRS aims to use World Lung Day to raise worldwide awareness of the serious health problem caused by respiratory diseases today. Reducing smoking, preventing exposure to environmental contamination, improving early diagnostic tools, providing training, and fostering research into these diseases will be the cornerstones of a significant improvement in the respiratory health of the world's population.

## References

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