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MEDIA RELEASE

World COPD Day: 17 November 2010

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

What is it?

How do you know if you have it?

Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (COPD) is Australia's unknown health crisis, affecting hundreds of thousands of people.

November is COPD Month and Wimmera Health Care Group's Respiratory Nurse Educator, Heather Macdonald is spreading the word about how people can manage this very treatable disease.

Heather said that COPD stands for:

- Chronic – long term
- Obstructive – the airways are partially or fully blocked so the air cannot flow freely in or out of the lungs
- Pulmonary – affecting the lungs
- Disease – sickness or illness

"COPD creeps up on you. People tend to ignore the symptoms, dismissing them as part of the ageing process" she said.

But being breathless is apparently NOT part of normal ageing.

"If you find walking around the block difficult or you get breathless mowing the lawns, making the bed or vacuuming, you may have COPD. You need to discuss these symptoms with your doctor" she said.

Heather said that people who have smoked, had significant exposure to other people smoking or irritants such as chemicals or spray paint, are at high risk of developing COPD.

There are more than 20,000 new people in Australia diagnosed with COPD every year. But just how many people have been screened?

Have you had Lung Function Testing?

COPD is not a sentence.

It cannot be cured, but it can be very well managed.

The earlier COPD is diagnosed, the earlier you can start slowing down the process of the disease.

With good management, comes a better quality of life.

People wanting further information about COPD and how to manage the disease should contact their local GP or the Community Rehabilitation Centre at Wimmera Health Care Group on ph. 5381 9011.

Alternatively, you can seek further information and advice from:

- The Australian Lung Foundation
Phone 1800654301
www.lungnet.com.au
- Your Pharmacist
- Your local hospital

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