



Review

Global alliance against chronic respiratory diseases in Italy (GARD-Italy): Strategy and activities

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Summary

The steady increase in incidence of chronic respiratory disease (CRD) now constitutes a serious public health problem. CRDs are often underdiagnosed and many patients are not diagnosed until the CRD is too severe to prevent normal daily activities. The prevention of CRDs and reducing their social and individual impacts means modifying environmental and social factors and improving diagnosis and treatment. Prevention of risk factors (tobacco smoke, allergens, occupational agents, indoor/outdoor air pollution) will significantly impact on morbidity and mortality.

The Italian Ministry of Health (MoH) has made respiratory disease prevention a top priority and is implementing a comprehensive strategy with policies against tobacco smoking, indoor/outdoor pollution, obesity, and communicable diseases. Presently these actions are not well coordinated. The Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD), set up by the World Health Organization, envisages national bodies; the GARD initiative in Italy, launched 11/6/2009, represents a great opportunity for the MoH.

Its main objective is to promote the development of a coordinated CRD program in Italy. Effective prevention implies setting up a health policy with the support of healthcare professionals and citizen associations at

Figure 3. Time trend of hospitalizations (number) for respiratory diseases (Source: Annual report on the activities of hospital-2005, Ministry of Health 2007).