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Title: Distribution and significance of GOLD 2011 disease severity classification in patients with COPD in China: A national cross-sectional survey

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Body: Background: The new GOLD stratification categories chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) into group A, B, C, and D. Objective: To investigate the distribution and significance of this stratification in patients with COPD in China. Methods: Patients were recruited from a 11 outpatient clinics in China and stratified to Group A-D. Patients in C1 and D1 meet FEV1 criteria only, C2 and D2 meet exacerbation criteria only, C3 and D3 meet both exacerbation and FEV1 criteria. Results: 1421 cases were included in this analysis. 18.0% patients were assigned to group A, 10.8% to group B, 26.2% to group C, and 45.0% to group D. Group C and D had a high prevalence of men with much higher prevalence of ex-smokers than group A and B. They had higher prevalence of chronic bronchitis than group A and B. The average frequency of acute exacerbation in the past year was increased from group A to D (0.27±0.45, 0.35±0.48, 1.11±1.45, 1.50±1.58, respectively, P<0.001). Group B had lower SF36-PCS (52.9±19.2 vs. 56.5±19.2) and SF36-MCS (54.9±25.9 vs. 61.8±22.8) than group C. The number of individuals with frequent exacerbations only was very small (8.9%). They differed from the other subgroups by comprising a high prevalence of never-smokers, low MMRC, low prevalence of chronic bronchitis history. C3 and D3 subgroups had lowest

SF36-PCS and SF36-MCS. Conclusions: The number of patients with group D is high and group B is low. They had different clinical characteristics regarding chronic bronchitis, exacerbation risk and quality of life. Grant: Chinese Medical Association chronic respiratory diseases grants (07010360044).