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Title: Characterization and functional progression of COPD in young adults (early COPD)

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Body: COPD is prevalent in individuals 65 years of age and older, but can also be identified at younger age (Early COPD). The characterization of this population has not been well described. We present baseline characteristics and functional progression of Early COPD individuals in the BODE cohort. All COPD patients from the BODE cohort were included (n=1708). Those with ≥3 annual spirometries were divided into ≤55 or ≥65 years of age (Early and Non-Early). Annual changes in functional parameters were recorded (FEV1 [ml] and BODE score). Changes were calculated individually by logistic regression. Analysis was done using two-sample t-Test, Wilcoxon rank test or Chi-square test where appropriate. A total of 566 subjects were <55 or >65 years of age. Baseline characteristics are shown in Table 1. Severity distribution by GOLD and BODE scores were similar in both groups, except for mild obstruction which was higher in the Early group. Mean annual changes in FEV1 and BODE scores were heterogeneous (Figure 1) and did not differ significantly between study groups: FEV1 decline was 39 and 41 ml/yr, while BODE scores increased 0.19 and 0.23 units, for Early and Non-Early COPD, respectively. FEV1 decline rates were higher in milder GOLD grades independent of age. The severity and activity of COPD seems to be the same regardless of age at onset. The absolute FEV1 decline is higher in milder GOLD grades independent of age.