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Title: Birmingham COPD cohort: Comparison of characteristics of employed with non-employed patients

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Body: Introduction Among those with COPD, 40% are of working age, but employment and work productivity are low. Little is known about factors affecting work performance in the UK. Aims and objectives To describe factors associated with work performance in a primary care cohort of COPD patients. Methods Patients with COPD from primary care are being recruited into a three-year cohort study. In addition to clinical data, occupational history and work performance are assessed. Interim baseline data was used to compare characteristics of those in and out of employment. Results Of 605 patients recruited so far, 11% were in work. Compared to those not in work, these patients are significantly younger (mean age 59.2 vs 69.6) more likely to be male (71.2% vs 66.0%) and current smokers (46.4% vs 25.0%). Adjusted for age, sex and smoking status, they have fewer co-morbidities (66.7% vs 74.3%, p for trend<0.01), less severe dyspnoea (p for trend<0.01), but no significant difference in disease severity (GOLD stage). They were more likely to report an exacerbation in the last 12 months (68.3 vs 61.1%), but lower health service utilisation (40.6% vs 46.6%). Of those in work, 30% had been absent from work at least once in 12 months due to COPD. Data will be updated at time of conference. Conclusions There are important clinical differences between COPD patients in and out of work, providing information for potential interventions.