

Medical Media Release

11 August 2010

GPs to drive Australian Lung Census

General Practitioners (GPs) are being urged to assess the lung health of 50,000 adults as part of the largest screening of lung function to be undertaken in Australia.

The Lung Census – a joint initiative of The Australian Lung Foundation, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Improvement Foundation, and MediMark International – will be conducted from 4 -15 October 2010 to support and promote Global Test Your Lungs Day (14 October) and the Year of the Lung.

The Lung Census will seek to identify thousands of individuals who would benefit from fuller medical follow-up with regard to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

COPD is a leading cause of death and disability in Australia affecting over two million sufferers of whom 50% are undiagnosed.¹⁻³

"We are very excited by this National initiative which will raise the awareness of the importance of lung function testing, and place the earlier identification of COPD firmly on the National health agenda," said Professor Peter Frith, Chairman of the Australian Lung Foundation's COPD Coordinating Committee.

"We are grateful for GPs' commitment to this important initiative to acquire an insight into the state of the nation's lung health," said Professor Frith.

The Lung Census was developed following the success of the CLEAR Program – a pioneering respiratory education initiative for GPs and their Practice Nurses that demonstrated the practicality and value of simple screening of lung function.

To reach the Lung Census target GPs will be asked to screen 25 patients aged 18 years and over during the two-week Lung Census period. Screening will involve a simple Screening Questionnaire followed by an assessment of lung function using the PiKo-6 handheld, electronic lung health meter. This will identify patients who may benefit from a fuller medical assessment.

GPs can find out more about the Lung Census and register to take part by visiting www.lungcensus.com.au, this should be done as soon as possible to ensure receipt of screening material and PiKo-6 lung health meter in time for the Lung Census.

Financial support for the Lung Census has been provided by an unconditional grant from Boehringer Ingelheim and Pfizer Australia.

To arrange an interview with Professor Peter Frith, please contact Claire Pope (0422 227 894) or Mairead McLaughlin (0405 951 572) at Ethical Strategies on (02) 8904 7300.

References: 1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010. *Australia's Health 2010*. Australia's health series no.12 Cat. no. AUD122. Canberra: AIHW. 2. Access Economics. *Economic Impact of COPD and Cost Effective Solutions*.18 October 2008. 3. Buist A.S. *et al*. International variation in the prevalence of COPD (The BOLD Study): a population-based prevalence study. *Lancet* 1 September 2007; 370: 741-750.