

**Case: M/37, Mr Garcia, shortness of breath**

**Doctor:** Hi Mr Garcia. What brought you here today?

**Patient:** I'm experiencing shortness of breath doctor.

**Doctor:** Oh right, I can see it. I'll tell the nurse to give you some oxygen right after. When did it start?

**Patient:** About 3 days ago and if I'm not mistaken it started gradually.

**Doctor:** Is your shortness of breath all the time or irregular?

**Patient:** It's on and off.

**Doctor:** Is it getting worse?

**Patient:** Yes, it's getting worse each day.

**Doctor:** Have you had similar episodes before?

**Patient:** Yes, around 2 or 3 weeks ago.

**Doctor:** Is there anything making it worse or making it better?

**Patient:** When I'm doing something, it feels like it's worsening but I feel better when I rest.

**Doctor:** Have you woken up catching your breath?

**Patient:** No.

**Doctor:** Are you feeling something else aside from this?

**Patient:** Yeah. I've got fever and cough too. That's about it.

**Doctor:** Is it dry cough or with phlegm?

**Patient:** It's with phlegm.

**Doctor:** Are you taking any medication? Allergies?

**Patient:** Yes, I'm having Albuterol inhaler and Robitussin for my cough. I don't have any allergies so far.

**Doctor:** Do you have history of any medical condition?

**Patient:** I've got right lower chest pain. I was also admitted cause of emphysema six years ago but I don't have any experience with surgeries.

**Doctor:** Ok. I'll be asking you some information. Please answer as closely as to how you remember it.

**Patient:** No problem doctor.

**Doctor:** Is anyone else in your household who's also sick these days?

**Patient:** My wife has got fever and cough as well.

**Doctor:** What do you do for a living Mr Garcia?

**Patient:** I'm a truck driver doctor.

**Doctor:** Can you please describe your lifestyle?

**Patient:** I drink occasionally but I can say I'm a chronic smoker. Perhaps about 2 to 3 packs in a day. I have never tried using illegal drugs. I don't exercise and I prefer meat over vegetables.

**Doctor:** Have you gone on a travel recently?

**Patient:** No. I don't have the luxury of travelling.

**Doctor:** Any pets at home?

**Patient:** No, we don't have. My wife's allergic to furry creatures.

**Doctor:** I think I didn't miss out any necessary information I needed Mr Garcia. Now, I'd like to do a physical check on you. Would that be alright?

**Patient:** Go ahead doctor.

**Doctor:** I'll start with your eyes. Next, please open your mouth for me. Good. Now I'd like to check for any swollen glands around your neck area. There is no presence of goiter either. Now, I'll be listening to your lungs. Please deep breath and I'll listen to your lungs. (Auscultate) Now, I'll tap your back. If it hurts, please tell me. Now, I'll examine your legs and arms. Nothing like rashes, that's great. I'm done. Thank you for your

cooperation. At this point Mr Garcia, I'm suspecting that it's COPD. It stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It is the occurrence of chronic bronchitis or emphysema, a pair of commonly co-existing diseases of the lungs in which the airways become narrowed. This leads to a limitation of the flow of air to and from the lungs, causing shortness of breath. It is caused by noxious particles or gas, most commonly from smoking, which triggers an abnormal inflammatory response in the lung. But still there are also other possibilities like a heart problem perhaps so I'll run some blood works and chest X ray on you to point out exactly. I'd also like you to have ECG. It's just to check the rhythm of your heart. And later, depending on the results, you may need additional tests. Meanwhile, I'll give you oxygen to help you breathe out better, alright? Do you have any questions?

**Patient:** None for now. The oxygen would be helpful, thank you.

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- **Give an outline of the patient's problem.**
- **What is COPD? What is the typical cause for it?**
- **In your opinion, how can one avoid acquiring this disease?**