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The race for healthy lungs starts with spirometry testing

World Spirometry Day 2012 is Ready, Set, Go!

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS: ACCP, ALAT, APSR, ATS, ERS, PATS and the Union) have been working hard across the world to encourage their members to hold and support spirometry testing and training events before and on World Spirometry Day (June 27, 2012; www.wsd2012.org) as well as beyond in the run up to the Olympics. This unprecedented global effort is one of the ways that FIRS can achieve one of its aims: to promote advocacy in matters of global respiratory health.

Going for Gold

The concept behind this year's activities is to use the Olympics as an inspiration to get people interested in spirometry testing and to educate them about their lung health and its importance for a healthy and active life. It also aims to ensure that people with lung disease feel that they can keep moving and keep active to ensure that they have fulfilled lives with optimal lung health.

Physical activity needs to be supported in the general population as well as *via* rehabilitation and regular training programmes for people with lung conditions. Over a 25-year period, lung function decline has been shown to be inversely related to levels of physical activity [1] and, while

several studies have shown that increased levels of physical activity in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, cystic fibrosis and restrictive lung disease result in decreased morbidity of each disease, more research is needed in this area [2–5]. Unfortunately, many individuals with lung disease tend to exercise less as they have fears about dyspnoea and fatigue, and these patients need to be supported, encouraged and educated about the benefits of exercise.

As part of the WSD2012 campaign we have looked for and found some inspirational people from across the world living with a range of lung conditions who have managed to run marathons, do martial arts, kayak, play rugby, swim, dance and cycle. One of the key messages to come from the lung champions is the need to know your lung health, monitor your lung health and adhere to your treatment regime.

Making the message heard

These key messages from the lung champions form the basis of the media campaign which will be run to coincide with testing around the world. This campaign will seek to dispel some of the myths about lung disease and advocate for people to be aware of their lung health, and appreciate and care for their lungs through regular exercise as their condition allows. Do the general public know that you can still be an Olympic athlete if you have

Statement of interest
None declared.

Lung champion: Josh Llewellyn-Jones, Cardiff, Wales

Having been given a 10% chance of living on my day of birth, I have been very conscious of keeping my lungs in the best condition possible to fight off the main symptom of cystic fibrosis: thick sticky mucus clogging up the airways. All my life I have pushed myself hard in all sporting activity, captaining rugby, football and cross country teams at school.

When I was 17, I was the first CF sufferer to climb Mt Kilimanjaro and at the summit fought a boxing match with the European heavyweight champion, Scott Welch, stripped to the waist and at minus 15°C.

We raised £120,000 then and, with other events I have undertaken, I have raised £500,000 so far for the CF Trust. In September this year I will be attempting a 24 hr nonstop exercise challenge to inspire other CF sufferers around the world that exercise can only do them good and is one of the very best treatments for CF and lung disease. See www.24hrs4cf.com. You must push yourself to the limit, never lose hope and never give up. Read more at www.wsd2012.org/lungchampions

asthma? Haile Gebrselasse, Paula Radcliffe and Olaf Tufté are all examples of Olympic athletes who turned to sport to help manage their asthma. Through adherence to regular treatment or therapy and knowing their lung health they have managed to succeed at the highest level.

On your marks, get-set, blow

We mustn't forget however that the underlying aim of WSD2012 is to raise awareness about spirometry. The *European Respiratory Roadmap*, published last year, outlines the need for regular spirometry testing in the population and the need for the public to understand the most basic functions of their respiratory system [6]. The lung community needs to take the lead from diabetes and cardiology to train patients to monitor their condition and the general public to become more aware of their normal breathing patterns and any changes to that. The European Lung Foundation has previously shown that outreach of spirometry to the public can be successful at identifying those at risk of lung disease (~25% in public screening were referred on for further testing) [7] and it is hoped that this year, spirometry will be promoted to a wider population who are interested in knowing and improving their lung health with the link to exercise/sport.

ERS are also addressing this issue with healthcare providers with the development

of the European Spirometry Driving Licence (ESDL), to produce training guidelines for a high-quality certified training programme in spirometry [8]. The aim of the project is to deliver a training programme in spirometry, providing the rationale, supporting educational materials and an assessment framework for training centres across Europe. In support of WSD2012, the Task Force chairs, B. Cooper and I. Steenbruggen, in collaboration with ERS, have developed an educational video on best practices of spirometry testing (www.ersnet.org/news/item/4133-european-spirometry-driving-licence-hermes-project.html).

The final hurdle: WSD2012 lung run

As keen sports people who are dedicated to raising the profile of the importance of lung health, we would like to invite each *Breathe* reader who will be attending the ERS annual Congress in Vienna to compete against us in the final activity in the WSD2012 campaign. A 5 km (3 mile) run will be held on the morning of Sunday, September 1, in the Prater public park, 5 min from the ERS Congress Centre (Messe Wien). We challenge you to don your running shoes and compete against us to become a lung champion and to fly the flag for your country, university or institution.

The run will be an opportunity to show the local Austrian community the importance of lung health and the commitment of ERS to promoting lung health (www.wsd2012.org/lungrun). Participants will also be encouraged to make a donation to the European Lung Foundation to help support their work to bring together patients, the public and respiratory professionals to positively influence lung health.

To continue the sporting theme at this year's ERS Annual Congress, delegates may also be interested in the Brian Whipp Memorial Symposium on cardio-pulmonary exercise physiology. The session will focus on how the respiratory system influences exercise performance for endurance athletes.

We hope, as readers of *Breathe*, that you will be supporting WSD 2012 with a testing or training event. It is the readers of this publication who can really make the difference to increase public awareness and understanding of spirometry, making it the first thought for anyone questioning their lung health.

References

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Important links

www.wsd2012.org
www.wsd2012.org/lungchampions
www.ersnet.org/news/item/4133-european-spirometry-driving-licence-hermes-project.html