



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL COPD AWARENESS MONTH

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease is the Fourth Leading Cause of Death

(November 9, 2007)—Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis, emphysema and lung cancer, is a significant public health and economic burden in the United States. An estimated 11.4 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD, however, as many as 24 million U.S. adults have some evidence of impaired lung function, indicating an under-diagnosis of the disease. COPD also has the distinction of being the only one of the top ten causes of death that is increasing. There is no cure for COPD.

COPD is a severe, but manageable, disease. Smoking is the single most significant risk factor contributing to the development of COPD and smoking cessation is the most effective (and cost-effective) intervention to reduce the risk for developing COPD and slow its progression. Other risk factors include air pollution, secondhand smoke, history of childhood respiratory infections, and occupational exposure to industrial pollutants.

Great strides are being made in improving therapies for COPD and improving quality of life for COPD patients, however, early detection of the disease is critical—the earlier the better in order to minimize permanent systemic damage and higher costs of managing care. Because COPD is insidious, it can exist for decades before becoming evident as diminished capacity to perform routine daily activities.

“COPD is a growing problem and we’re seeing it in younger and younger individuals,” said Michelle Bernth, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Advocacy for the American Lung Association of the Central States. “We urge everyone who is at risk for COPD to take time during National COPD Awareness Month to consult with their physician

and ask about a lung function test (i.e., spirometry).” At-risk persons include those over 45 who are current or former smokers, have a cough that produces phlegm, experience shortness of breath upon routine exertion, are exposed to environmental pollution where they live and/or work, and/or experience chest tightness upon exposure to cold weather.

The American Lung Association is committed to being the leader nationally and locally in COPD research, education, and advocacy activities. The goal of the Lung Association is to reduce the health, economic, and social burden of COPD patients, their families and caregivers, and to improve their quality of life. For more information about COPD, please call the Lung HelpLine at 1-800-LUNGUSA to speak to a Registered Nurse, Respiratory Therapist or Quit-Smoking Specialist for immediate, clear and accurate information about lung health. Information may also be obtained online at www.lungusa.org.

About the American Lung Association

Beginning our second century, the American Lung Association is the leading organization working to prevent lung disease and promote lung health. Lung disease death rates continue to increase while other leading causes of death have declined. The American Lung Association funds vital research on the causes of and treatments for lung disease. With the generous support of the public, the American Lung Association is *“Improving life, one breath at a time.”* For more information about the American Lung Association or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or log on to www.lungusa.org.

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