



On September 14, 2017 Bangladesh Lung Foundation (BLF), Beacon Pharmaceuticals Ltd and The Daily Star jointly organised a roundtable titled: "Working together for better lung health" in observance of World Lung Day. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.

Raising awareness about lung complications

Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan Ndc, Psc (Retd), Associate Editor, The Daily Star
I welcome everyone for taking part in the noble task of raising awareness about lung complications. But, a question mark hangs on what you are doing specifically, what more other stakeholders are doing, how are you communicate and involving people. You have made progresses. Still we have far more to do. We expect you to clearly figure out how we can breathe in fresh air and keep our lungs well-functioning. We want you to involve us – the media – more strongly so that we can relay your message. We are the medium to convey, and you have the information and knowledge to be conveyed. I think we should be more involved and increase our engagement in this process. We would observe the world lung day once a year. But we should not remain silent in the rest of the year.

Dr. Md. Abdus Shakur Khan, Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Lung Foundation (BLF) and Moderator of the session
On 25 September 2017, World Lung Day will be formally observed for the first time all over the world. Bangladesh Lung Foundation is the only organization which signed on the charter. To create awareness among mass people about the lung problem and its rapid swelling, World Lung Day will be observed from this year on all over the world.

Prof. Dr. Md. Rashidul Hassan, President, Bangladesh Lung Foundation (BLF)
Today's topic is working together for better lung health, which stands on three pillars – education, exercise, and eradication of risk factors. People need to be educated on the causes of lung disease. The age-old adage that sneezing and coughing spread diseases can be passed on to people. When it comes to exercise, children should be inspired to run and play in the fresh air instead of being glued to phones and computer games. The other is eradication of risk factors. For example, we can spread the idea how avoiding smoking can reduce the risk of lung complications.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Captain, Bangladesh National Cricket Team
I myself am a victim of lung complication. Every year I need to consult doctors in this regard. I have gathered so much information about lung disease of which I was not aware of beforehand. Actually, willpower is everything. It is a very positive sign that you are voicing for the issue and raising awareness. But, at the same time, we need to ensure that the message you are trying to convey reach all parts of the country.

Mohammad Ebadul Karim, Managing Director, Beacon Pharmaceuticals Ltd
We are working putting our hand together with Bangladesh Lung Foundation. You know we won't have patent obligation till 2033 when it comes to producing medicine. We can produce any medicine. So, we have come up with several products to serve people. We have even introduced a cancer product. These medicines have benefited a lot of people in home and abroad. Thanks to the local production that we have now been able to bring the price down to level of people's affordability. People around the world including Europe and US are also purchasing our anticancer and antiviral products. Every month the beneficiaries are rising in number.

Prof. Md. Mostafizur Rahman, President, Bangladesh Society of Allergy and Immunology
21% people of the age over 40 suffer from COPD disease – one of the greatest causes of death around the world. It means that people at their productive age like 35 often get their respiratory system or particularly lungs damaged. Whatever treatment is

provided at this stage, one cannot get back to his previous health. Developing complications at such a productive age impacts all aspects of his life and family. It can be prevented by avoiding smoking. Astoundingly, male people are vulnerable to COPD in urbanities due to exposure to vehicle fumes, while females are prone to COPD in rural areas due to exposure to fuel woods. Anti-smoking awareness should be raised. In case of Tuberculosis, we observe that it spreads greatly in over-populated areas and the places where sanitation has not been ensured.

Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmed, President, Bangladesh Asthma Association
We need clean air for healthy life. We need healthy lung. Unfortunately, lung disease constitutes one-third of all diseases. Occupational lung diseases are increasing. We are trying to create awareness among people in this regard. The government has to formulate and apply strict regulations against smoking in public places.

Prof. Dr. Mohammed Shahedur Rahman Khan, Director, National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital (NIDCH)
Our respiratory system, one of the most vital parts of our body, is open to air. You draw air in for Oxygen without even knowing what you are actually inhaling. This air contains many poisonous components like lead. All these are the result of air pollution. We smoke without knowing what we are spreading. Our children are becoming the worst victims of the air we let out in the process of smoking. We, doctors, should offer proper counseling to our patients. Breastfeeding, exercise and other lifestyle changes can make a difference.

Dr. K C Ganguly, Professor of Respiratory Medicine, National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital (NIDCH)
Lung problems are not much different from the problems with other health sectors. The overall healthcare system is grappling with the problems of inadequate facilities, inadequate experts and inadequate trainees. To mitigate this, we need a huge amount of investment in the health sector. Lung and health mostly depend on the environment. The reason behind so many children suffering from asthma is dust and smoke. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) disease is the third leading cause of death around the world. The number one cause of this disease is smoking. Almost 80% cases of the disease are caused by smoking. Rest 20% is the result of other environmental hazards. Once the pollution comes down to the minimal level, respiratory diseases will be minimum as well.

Dr. Kazi Saifuddin Bennoor, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital (NIDCH)
We will discuss the focal point of the world lung day. Forum for International Respiratory Society has prepared a memorandum on May 25, 2017, and all the major respiratory societies became its signatories. The focal point of this memorandum is 'United for Lung Health'. It implies that all the people from all spheres should be the beneficiaries of this initiative. Consisting of six articles in the memorandum, the main point of the article 1 is clean air and healthy lung. Another issue is ensuring smoke-free environment, for example, avoiding smoking and smoke-producing factors like burning woods. Article 2 focuses on recognition of challenges. Identifying preventable deaths, ensuring hospitalization, reducing physical and mental sufferings of patients and capacity building fall under the purview of this article. Cost-effective treatment is also a condition mentioned in this article. Article 3 mainly mentions preventable causes. HIV, the mystery yet to be solved by medical researchers, takes a toll on lungs. Pneumonia and other lung complications should be prevented in childhood. Article 4 dictates access to

effective management. It is often observed that many people cannot get access to healthcare system due to high cost, transport problem and social stigma. Article 5 focuses on high-quality researches. We need customized research programs to deal with lung complications in the country. Article 6 mainly promotes two slogans. No nation is spared from lung disease. No person, organization or country will conquer lung disease on its own. We are all connected by the air we share.

Prof. Dr. Md. Ali Hossain, Secretary General, Bangladesh Lung Foundation (BLF)
There lies a noble reason behind observing the world lung day, which is working together to curb lung complications. Quite a few lung diseases are preventable – an issue, which needs to be addressed. You know around 65 million people around the world are suffering from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), of which around 3 million die every year. Ten million people get affected by Tuberculosis every year, of which around 1.5 million die every year. There are pneumonia and other lung diseases as well. Among others, those who are suffering from lung complications have the air pollution to blame. We undertook two surveys on lung disease patients – one in 1999 and another in 2010. The ten-year span marked almost two-fold rise in the number of patients. Urbanization is one of the burning reasons behind this rise. From this platform, we have to promise we would raise awareness about the ways lung diseases can be prevented, and convey the message to people instead of limiting it to this discussion only.

Syed Mahbubul Alam, Technical Adviser, The Union
Nearly 43% people in Bangladesh consume Tobacco. Males are vulnerable than females. To control tobacco consumption, we need strict law enforcement. Nearly 10 million women who don't smoke bear the bad effect of smoking in the public places. About 95% children at home become victim of passive smoking. If smoking can be stopped successfully at public places, so many people will be benefited. Pollution due to constructions especially in the summer season is immense. But, the local government is careless about this. Only raising awareness cannot control criminal activities. For this, we need enforcement of law. The environment law has been made so complicated that one cannot easily lodge a complaint regarding environment. This should be rectified.

Moinul Ahsan Saber, Writer
I can share my personal experience. My mother had chronic asthma, which put her in displeasure all throughout her life. I inherited that disease. But, lifestyle changes and awareness have relieved me of this curse for last 25 years. So, my own account suggests that awareness can bring about a visible change. The second thing is that I was a chain smoker in my university life. But, I gave up smoking when I became a father since smoking could cause harm to my child. After saying no to smoking, I had never had to resort to inhaler. Our films and dramas often portray the protagonist suffering from some common diseases like blood cancer. This scenario hasn't changed over 50 years. Time has come to change this perception. Lung cancer and respiratory complications should be presented through the films and literature so that people become aware of these.

Wahida Mollick Jolly, Professor, Dept. of Theatre and Performance Studies, DU
We used to observe smoking as a habit of most male students. But now I even observe my female students smoking. People should be aware of the serious danger like lung complications that smoking brings about.

Sharmili Ahmed, Actress
You see in the capital that big vehicles emit so huge amount of fumes that you often feel irritating sensation in your nose and face. The government has a role to play to reduce this air pollution. In modern countries, you cannot go with cars emitting black fumes. Cars of this kind will be immediately banned. The government should take immediate actions to control air pollution.

Jayanto Chattopadhyay, Actor, President, Club Excel (Organizations of Asthma and COPD Patients)
If we all become patients, where will we get so many doctors to treat us? Therefore, we should resort to prevention not cure. Law is there. But, who will implement? You can observe that no birds are sitting on the tree branches beside highways near Dhaka due to air pollution caused by nearby brickkilns.

Habib Wahid, Singer
We don't know how much we would be able to do for ourselves. But, we should ensure better lungs for our future generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❑ Identify the paths of prevention, hospitalization of patients, reduced physical and mental sufferings, better infrastructure for better access to nearby hospitals and capacity-building
- ❑ Make environmental law accessible to general people so that they can legally complain about any crimes against the environment
- ❑ Make people aware of the necessity of breastfeeding, which ensures better lungs and less asthma
- ❑ Focus on preventive measures such as environmental cleanliness and fresh air
- ❑ Disseminate the fact that Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) disease is the third leading cause of death around the world.
- ❑ Spread the idea that lung complications is not the end of the world and that they can be treated
- ❑ Provide students with the knowledge about hygiene
- ❑ Convey the message about the importance of better lungs through films and other creative mediums
- ❑ Inspire children to take exercise and enjoy outdoor games instead of resorting to virtual games
- ❑ Let the government take strong actions to stop unplanned constructions, air-polluting brick kilns and public-place smoking in order to keep the air fresh.