



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oklahoma HMO provides COPD awareness, smoking cessation tips

November is National COPD Awareness Month; 19.6 percent of Oklahoma adults are smokers

OKLAHOMA – A 2016 survey estimates that 19.6 percent of Oklahoma adults smoke, above the national average of 17.1 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. November is National Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Awareness Month and GlobalHealth, an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization (HMO), is providing smoking cessation tips to help Oklahomans quit smoking and increase awareness of COPD symptoms.

“Cigarette smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the U.S.,” said Dr. Wesley Williams, medical director at GlobalHealth. “Despite this, some smokers find quitting to be daunting, thinking it will take months or years before seeing health improvements. The good news is that some benefits can be seen within hours of quitting, and there are resources to help Oklahomans who want to quit smoking and improve their quality of life.”

GlobalHealth is offering the following tips to help Oklahomans quit smoking and identify the symptoms of COPD:

Know COPD and the symptoms. COPD, which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema, is a chronic lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. The main cause of COPD is smoking, and common symptoms include breathlessness even after mild exertion, chronic coughing, frequent clearing of the throat, chest tightness, wheezing and an increase in the production of sputum – a mixture of saliva and mucus.

Get tested for COPD. If you are at risk for COPD or have symptoms, you should be tested through spirometry, a simple test of how well your lungs work. For this test, the patient blows air into a mouthpiece with tubing attached to a small machine that measures the amount of air you blow out and how fast you can blow it. Spirometry can detect COPD before symptoms develop. Your primary care physician (PCP) may also use the test results to find out how severe your COPD is and to help you set treatment goals. In addition, your PCP may want you to have a chest X-ray and/or other tests, such as an arterial blood gas test, which measures the oxygen level

in your blood. This test can show how well your lungs can move oxygen into your bloodstream and remove carbon dioxide from your blood.

Recognize the benefits of quitting. Quitting smoking improves heart rate, blood pressure, circulation, decreases the risk of coronary heart disease, decreases the risk of stroke and decreases the risk of lung cancer. The timeline for seeing real benefits to smoking cessation is much faster than most people realize. Health benefits begin in as little as an hour after the last cigarette and continue to improve. When a person quits smoking, the body will start to naturally heal and regain the vitality of a non-smoker over time. The sooner a smoker quits, the faster they will reduce their risk of cancer, heart and lung disease, and other conditions related to smoking. Some effects, such as lowered blood pressure, are seen almost immediately.

Get help to quit smoking. There are proven treatments to help smokers who want to quit, including advice from your PCP, counseling, behavioral therapies, nicotine replacement products and non-nicotine medications. Oklahomans looking to quit can reach the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) or online at www.okhelpline.com. This resource offers free support, advice and counseling from experienced quit-line coaches, a personalized quit plan and practical information on how to quit, including ways to cope with nicotine withdrawal. The helpline also contains the latest information on stop-smoking medications, free or discounted medications and referrals to other resources.

About GlobalHealth

GlobalHealth is changing health insurance in Oklahoma. As an industry leader, GlobalHealth is an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization covering more than 44,000 individuals in all 77 Oklahoma counties. Working proactively with each member, GlobalHealth engages a personalized management plan to address their specific needs and ensure the best possible health outcomes. GlobalHealth utilizes cutting edge, predictive data technology as a foundation to deliver improved healthcare as part of its commitment to making health insurance more affordable. Its membership includes state and education employees, federal employees, municipal employees and Medicare Advantage members. GlobalHealth employs more than 250 associates throughout Oklahoma. To learn more, visit www.GlobalHealth.com.

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