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Introduction

The Montreal Chest Institute of the McGill University Health Centre initiated, evaluated and implemented the **Living Well with COPD** program in Québec, in collaboration with the Respiratory Health Network of the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ) and Boehringer Ingelheim Canada. The program has been approved by the health ministry of Québec and implemented in all the regions of the province by the Agence de développement de réseaux locaux de services de santé et de services sociaux (ADRLSSSS), emphasizing first line services. Most of the health professionals in Québec use this evidence-based program to educate their COPD patients. This program has been shown to have a positive impact on patient's health and a tremendous reduction in the frequency of hospitalizations and emergency room visits.



How did it all begin?

In the 1990's, while services to asthmatic patients were becoming more structured and education and management tools were being introduced, health professionals dealing with the chronic and complex nature of COPD still lacked this kind of organization. Noticing this, a team of professionals under the leadership of Jean Bourbeau and Diane Nault, a respirologist and a specialized respiratory nurse, initiated in 1996 steps to develop, evaluate and implement a self-management program specific to COPD **Living Well with COPD**. This program was to ensure optimal management of COPD, continuity of care, development of a global care approach focusing on patients and their family, standardization of care in specialized clinics as well as first line service.

The program **Living Well with COPD** evolved from an extensive review of the scientific literature in COPD, experts' opinion across Québec, and patient focus groups. The initial draft was tested in a pilot project with 16 patients and 5 health professionals. A team of researchers and respirologists from the Respiratory Health Network of the FRSQ developed a study project, a multicentre randomized clinical trial aiming to evaluate the program. As a result, the 1st edition of **Living well with COPD** was made available in 1998.

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Outcomes:

On patients with COPD

It was demonstrated through a one-year multicentre randomized clinical trial in Québec that the program **Living well with COPD**, when implemented under the supervision of a health professional, can reduce hospitalizations and emergency room visits by 40%, unscheduled medical visits by 60%, and improves patients quality of life ¹. This program, combined to regular follow-up by a case manager, helped COPD patients in taking charge of their health by making lifestyle changes and self-managing their illness ².

Positive effects (reduced hospitalizations) are still being observed after 2 years³ and results of a recent cost analysis showed that the program leads to a reduction of costs⁴.

On the health care system and on health professionals

1. Standardization of the education and follow-up given to COPD patients and their family
2. Health care and educational approaches based on the most recent scientific evidence and guidelines (Canadian Thoracic Society recommendations for management of COPD, 2003)
3. Optimal use of health services

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Partnerships

The program **Living well with COPD** is based on a successful public-private partnership between the MUHC Montreal Chest Institute, the FRSQ's Respiratory Health Network, Boehringer Ingelheim Canada, Pfizer Canada, the Canadian Lung Association, the Réseau québécois de l'asthme et de la MPOC (RQAM), health care professionals and patients within and outside of Canada. This collaboration has brought to life an updated version of the program, 2nd edition 2005.