Climate change threatens the quality of life of respiratory patients, stretching beyond physical health to overall well-being

A new report by Economist Impact **"Cleaner air, clearer lungs, better lives: exploring the intersection of air quality, health inequalities and lung health"**, supported by Chiesi, sheds a light on the interplay between air pollution, patients' health, and socio-economic disparities. It reflects that climate-related factors can have a significant impact on lung health of patients from different socio-economic settings.

The report includes a scoping literature review and the findings of a survey of respiratory patients from five countries in Europe (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) that delves into how they experience the adverse effects of poor air quality on both their symptoms and general well-being.

The invisible barrier to well-being

Nearly all of respondents living in areas with poor air quality report that exercising outdoors makes their lung conditions worse.

Over half of them report having to avoid outdoor activities and social engagements.

It's time for us all to prioritise #ActionOverWords in the fight against the climate health crisis.

Patient perspectives are key in understanding lung health

According to patients' perception:

Climate-related factors and pollution from the built environment are the main causes of pollution.

The second and third most frequently reported causes were climate-related factors: namely, **heatwaves/extreme weather (43%)** and **increased pollen levels (41%)**.

Respondents from both urban and rural areas consistently reported that these factors had a significant impact on air quality, indicating that climate change poses an issue in all areas.

Poor air quality contributes to worsening symptoms and lower quality of life for people with lung conditions.

More than **4 in 10 people** living with poor air quality think a lot about their health worsening.

Over half of those living in an environment of poor air quality report having avoided outdoor activities, whether exercise or social.

Those in urban areas face a greater burden of poor air quality.

The impact of poor air quality is noticeably higher in cities than in the countryside.

35% of people in urban areas say that air quality has affected their symptoms a great deal and **only 5%** not at all. In rural areas, the equivalent figures are **22%** and **14%**.

Good air quality may act as a buffer to climate-related challenges.

Good general air quality may mitigate the impact of heatwaves and pollen on the symptoms of those with lung conditions.

Almost **8 out of 10 respondents** who reported living in areas of poor air quality say that pollen makes their conditions worse.

Patients' perception suggest that climate-related factors are likely to take a greater toll on lung health.

- Despite overall improvements of air quality in the five countries, air pollution is still a **major health concern** for European patients.
- Yet, **76% of survey respondents** perceive that air quality has deteriorated or stayed the same over the last five years.
- This could be due to climate-related factors: **heatwaves** and **pollen load** are reported by respondents as the **second most** and **third most** common causes of poor air quality.
- Heatwaves and pollen load will likely **grow in frequency** and **intensify** due to climate change.
- The evidence base for the extent of these problems is lacking. The term "heatwave" continues to **lack a single, accepted definition**, and comprehensive, long term data series of pollen levels **remain relatively rare**.

We need holistic health policy solutions so that all of us can breathe equally.

We encourage businesses to:

Adopt sustainable practices that reduce their environmental impact and promote respiratory health along their healthca re value chain.

We call for policymakers to:

Recognise that climate-related factors are significant contributors to lung health.

Address the unique needs of respiratory patients within broader climate adaptation and health equity strategies.

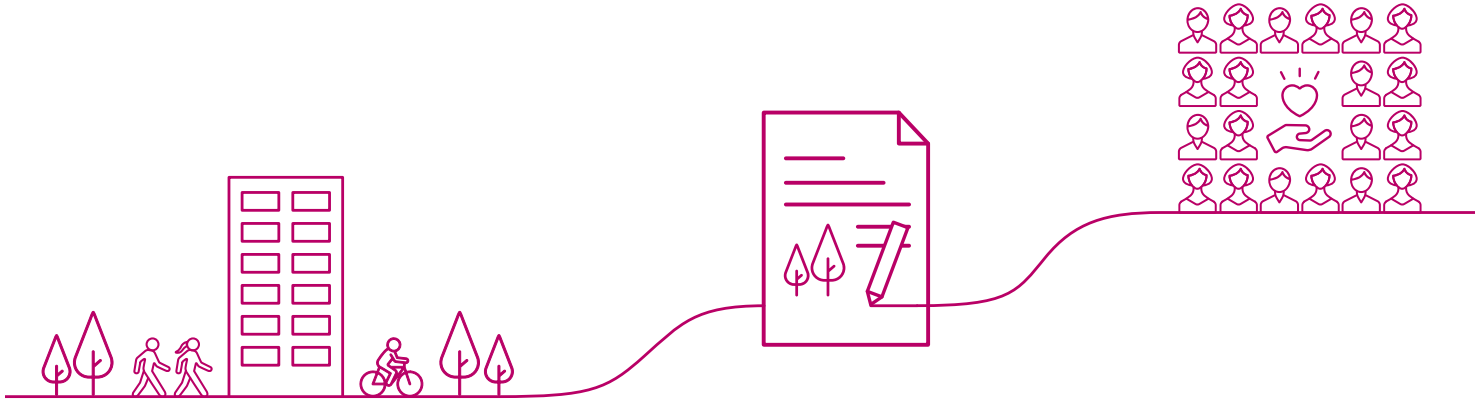
Create targeted plans to address areas with particularly low air quality.

We take collective action to:

Facilitate collaboration among healthcare providers, environmental experts, industry, community representatives, and patient advocacy groups.

Promote dialogue and education: helping policymakers ensure that respiratory policies are informed by diverse perspectives, culturally sensitive, and effective in mitigating the impacts of climate change on respiratory health.

Prioritise research that examines the intersection of respiratory health and climate change, including the specific risks, vulnerabilities, and adaptation strategies for individuals with respiratory conditions.



Visit **www.actionoverwords.org** for the full report by Economist Impact, and for more information about Chiesi's sustainability commitments.

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