UK Survey Research Reveals Major Mental-Health Awareness Gap in Chronic Respiratory Disease

Tele-Therapies research presented at ERS Congress 2026, Barcelona calls for psychosocial support to become an integral part of chronic respiratory disease care.



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LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, September 18, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- London, 18 September 2026 — New UK research presented at the European Respiratory Society (ERS) Congress 2026 in Barcelona has highlighted a significant gap in public awareness of the relationship between chronic respiratory disease and mental health.

On 8 September, Dr Devi Sundar, Director of Integrative Health and researcher at Tele-Therapies Ltd, presented findings from the Breath & Mind national survey, conducted with YouGov in October 2025 among 2,173 UK adults.

The survey found that 69% of respondents from the public reported low or no awareness of the relationship between chronic respiratory disease and mental health.

The presentation, "Emotional Breathlessness and Mental-Health Awareness in Chronic Respiratory Disease," examined the psycho-social dimensions of chronic respiratory illness and their implications for respiratory services, public health, policy and strategic commissioning.

"Emotional breathlessness is about the person, not just the lungs."

Dr Sundar says limited awareness may make it harder for people to recognise when they need psychological support, know where to seek help, or feel confident discussing their experiences with healthcare professionals.

Awareness varied across demographic groups. It was 38% among separated or divorced respondents and people not in employment, compared with 28% among men.

By age, awareness was 32% among 18–24-year-olds, falling to 25% among 35–44-year-olds, before rising to 36% among those aged 55 and over. Regional awareness ranged from 27% in the South East to 37% in Wales.

The findings have implications for public health, strategic commissioning, neighbourhood health and Integrated Care Systems.

Respiratory illness is experienced within a wider social environment. Fear, stigma and psychological difficulties can affect help-seeking, treatment engagement and participation in pulmonary (lung) rehabilitation. Housing, income, employment, transport, relationships, regional environment and social isolation may also influence how people manage chronic respiratory disease.

“Strategic commissioning must not only see the structure; it must see the person within the structure.”

The **Breath & Mind** report proposes five priorities: **routine mental-health screening at first respiratory assessment; psychosocially integrative pulmonary rehabilitation; mandatory trauma-informed training for respiratory clinicians; a national awareness campaign on emotional breathlessness; and integration of psychosocial support into community and neighbourhood services.**

Economic modelling associated with the proposals estimates potential NHS savings of **£100–500 million annually**, presented in the report as part of the economic case for psychosocial integration.

The research builds on Dr Sundar’s parliamentary engagement. Following written evidence shared with **Alex McIntyre, Gloucester MP**, Written Parliamentary Question **UIN 66852** was tabled on **10 July 2025**, asking about integrated mental-health support for people living with COPD and other long-term lung conditions.

The Government’s response referred to **NHS Talking Therapies for anxiety and depression associated with long-term conditions**.

Dr Sundar subsequently followed the **Westminster Hall debate for World COPD Day on 20 November 2025**, where the Government outlined its commitment to improving respiratory

care.

She is now seeking clarification on whether **psychological assessment and evidence-based psycho-social interventions** will be integrated into future respiratory service frameworks, pathway transformation programmes and multidisciplinary respiratory care.

Dr Sundar has also contacted **Peter Hand, Public Affairs and Stakeholder Manager at the Royal College of Psychiatrists**, in 2025 and 2026, three written communications regarding the Breath & Mind survey and its relevance to the Mental Health All-Party Parliamentary Group.

The psychological and social burden of respiratory disease was also highlighted at the ERS Congress session on **9 September 2026**, *“Invisible Burdens: The Stigma of Lung Conditions.”*

For people living with chronic respiratory disease, **fear, anxiety, shame, stigma, guilt and isolation** may remain invisible within conventional clinical pathways.

The question for strategic commissioners is therefore not simply:

“What services does this population need?”

It is also:

“What does it take for people to recognise their needs, trust services, access support and experience care that is meaningful to them?”

Dr Sundar argues that compassionate, stigma-aware care requires professionals to recognise lived experience, protect dignity and treat patients as partners in their care.

Tele-Therapies believes that bringing respiratory and mental health closer together is an important step towards genuinely person-centred respiratory care.

Report: Breath & Mind: Closing the Gap of Emotional Breathlessness in Chronic Respiratory Disease — UK National Awareness Survey Report 2025 (2.0)

Sundar, D. (2025). UK national awareness survey conducted in collaboration with YouGov, October 2025, n=2,173 UK adults.

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