

Chronic Cough



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Chronic cough can be a frustratingly difficult problem for patients and clinicians. People with chronic cough are distressed by the frequency and severity of the symptom, its complications, and how it causes them to modify their activities to avoid situations that might trigger cough. Progress in addressing these issues has been slow and intermittent. What is exciting is that there are now signs that things might be changing. A series of articles in the journal details these advances, while at the same time providing practical information on how to assess and manage patients with chronic cough.¹

New concepts based around cough hypersensitivity² are leading to improved management strategies and showing promise in relieving the distress from persistent cough. A key step is the initial assessment of chronic cough, and the range of available tools is detailed by Cho et al.³ Objective measurement of cough frequency paired with valid health status measures provide powerful tools to assess cough for both patient care and research. Cough assessment and management optimally involves a multidisciplinary approach, particularly when cough is severe or refractory to standard management. The importance of otolaryngological assessment is described by Altman et al.⁴ The role of speech pathology assessment and management is described by Vertigan et al.⁵ Several randomized trials have now identified an important positive effect of speech pathology treatment techniques that not only reduce cough severity and frequency but

also give patients a greater sense of control in managing their cough and cough triggers.

Addressing key cough mechanisms involves managing eosinophilic inflammation and cough hypersensitivity.⁶ There is an emerging array of treatments that are now being evaluated in chronic cough. Optimism is buoyed by the efficacy of inhibiting the P2X3 receptor leading to clinically important cough suppression in patients who were refractory to other therapies.⁷ Where cough was once seen as a difficult problem, we can now feel optimistic that applying systematic assessment and management and awaiting new therapeutic options will lead to improved outcomes for patients with chronic cough.

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