Chronic Lung Disease of Prematurity: The next epidemic of COPD?

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Chronic lung disease of prematurity (CLD) remains the most common respiratory complication in infancy and occurs in 15-20% of all preterm births. Thus in Australia approximately 4000-5000 infants with CLD are born each year. Dramatic changes in neonatal care have resulted in a change in the clinical presentation of CLD. Children with CLD are much more premature, will have been ventilated for a shorter time at lower pressures and inspired oxygen partial pressures and almost all will have received prenatal corticosteroids and/or postnatal surfactant. In addition, there is good evidence that the underlying pathology in CLD has also changed, with less prominent airway pathology, and is dominated instead by abnormalities of the lung periphery. It is now recognised that respiratory events in early life carry through to influence respiratory function in adults. Evidence is mounting that those infants born prematurely, in particular those with CLD, are at increased risk of lower lung function as adults and it has been hypothesised that these individuals are at increased risk of developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

This presentation will explore the current evidence for chronic lung disease of prematurity being the next influx of patients with COPD later in life.