The diagnosis of COPD exacerbation relies on worsening of chronic symptoms including increased dyspnea, increased cough, and increased volume or purulence of sputum production.

Do not order a CXR for every COPD exacerbation. A CXR can help you if the diagnosis is in question or if you suspect underlying pneumonia.

If you suspect influenza, then checking a viral swab can be helpful as it will change your management. However, it is not necessary to identify other viruses as the treatment for the COPD exacerbation will not change with those infections.

Patients with more severe underlying diseases and/or a moderate to severe COPD exacerbation will benefit from antibiotics such as doxycycline, amoxicillin-clavulanate or sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim.

Oral prednisone 40mg daily for 5 days should be used as the treatment of choice for COPD exacerbation in nursing facilities rather than IV or IM steroids.

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