Table 3

British Thoracic Society recommendations on criteria for referral of COPD patients to a specialist respiratory outpatient clinic[15]

Reason	Purpose
Diagnostic uncertainty and exclusion of asthma	Establish diagnosis and optimise treatment. Check degree of reversibility
Unusual symptoms, e.g. haemoptysis	Investigate cause including malignancy
Rapid decline in FEV_1	Optimise management
Suspected severe COPD	Optimise management
Onset of cor pulmonale	Confirm diagnosis and optimise treatment
Assessment for home oxygen	Optimise management, measure blood gases and prescribe oxygen
Assessing the need for pulmonary rehabilitation	Optimise treatment and refer to service
Bullous lung disease	Confirm diagnosis and refer to medical or surgical units for bullectomy
COPD <40 years of age	Establish diagnosis and exclude alpha-1-antitrypsin deficiency
Assessment for lung transplantation or lung volume reduction surgery	Identify criteria for referral to transplant centre
Frequent chest infections	Rule out bronchiectasis
Dysfunctional breathing	Establish diagnosis and refer for pharmacological or non-pharmacological management