Stages of care provided by Washington University Physicians

Margaret, age 53, visits her doctor and complains of lethargy, discomfort and shortness of breath.

1. **Primary Care**
   - **First contact with the patient**
   - Margaret’s primary care doctor is concerned about the severity of her symptoms and refers her to a Washington University Physician at Barnes-Jewish Hospital for an in-depth assessment.

2. **Secondary Care**
   - **Medical specialists**
   - A cardiologist rules out heart problems but suspects pulmonary disease. Margaret is referred to a tertiary provider — this time, a pulmonary specialist — for a conclusive assessment.

3. **Tertiary Care**
   - **Specialized consults, diagnostics, treatments**
   - This pulmonologist confirms that Margaret is experiencing a significant decrease in pulmonary function. Diagnosis: advanced Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease — emphysema.

4. **Quaternary Care**
   - **Advanced medicine, highly specialized, research-oriented**
   - Next, a thoracic surgeon considers whether a lung volume reduction surgery would relieve Margaret’s symptoms. Instead, given her condition, it is recommended that she consider participating in a clinical research trial for a new treatment modality.