

Tobacco Cessation: A Dental Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Tobacco smoking is considered as deleterious habit and is the second most common risk factor for lung diseases and is more prevalent in south East Asia. Tobacco use, that is considered as an epidemic is one of the greatest barriers for global health. Different health care professionals, as well as Dentists perform a unique role in tobacco cessation. Dentist are active in educating the society about the various aspects related to oral and overall health of the body. Dentists have advantages over other health care professionals in quitting smoking because of frequent dental visits and the visible effects of tobacco use in their mouth.

KEYWORDS: Tobacco Cessation, Dentist, Dental Care

INTRODUCTION

Like other health care professionals, Dentists also plays an indispensable role in tobacco cessation.¹ The effectiveness of tobacco interventions in dentistry has been addressed from various points of view, dentist have the opportunity to educate and manipulate individuals and relate his/her illness to their tobacco use, directly or indirectly, forms of tobacco use such as cigarettes/ beedis/ gutkha, frequency and duration of use should be asked and then prescribe tobacco cessation therapy.² Dentists in the process of oral health examination can come across patients tobacco use thus providing necessary cessation guidelines and aiding in quitting the habit.³

Dentists usually have easy access to the children, teenagers and their respective gaurdians, which makes it easier for them to manipulate individuals to avoid and quit tobacco use before they become dependent, have more time to talk to them, show the adverse effects of tobacco in their mouth and educate them about the harmful effects of tobacco.^{4,5}

The advice so delivered by the dental and other health professionals when accompanied by the various communication means, proved to be quite effective, providing miraculous results. Dentists were effective in promoting shorter-term abstinence as per a meta-analysis of studies on tobacco counseling by health providers. It was also observed in a systematic review of the literature that if an individual follow proper dental intervention with at least 6 months of follow-up, the quitting rate and initial dependency rates went quite lower.⁶ Different types of images and text messages so printed on the packets of cigarette, as warnings, were also found as quite an effective method to deviate the individuals from the use of tobacco to a large extent. Thus, in Canada and United Kingdom, the images depicting the various

regions of the oral cavity affection by tobacco use were used as warning and were thus, published on the packets of the various tobacco products, informing their countrymen about the hazardous effects of tobacco use.^{2,7}

The “5 A’s model” (ask, advise, assess, assist, arrange) is usually recommended for patients who are willing to quit. In order to assist patients, the suggestions are inclusive of various medications and tobacco intervention techniques that will not only deviate their attention of the tobacco use but also lower down their tobacco cravings. Those smokers that are unwilling to quit at the time of intervention, the plan of action involve various motivational sessions along with their education about the pros-and-cons of use of tobacco, especially the effect of tobacco use on their loved ones and on their economic status. This additional strategy includes motivational interviews concerning the “5 R’s” (relevance, risks, rewards, roadblocks, repetition). The action plan also has a slot for recent tobacco quitting individuals to prevent their effect relapse.^{3,8}

Motivational interviewing methods have been recommended in models for individual oral health promotion. The various Dental professionals choose various methods to motivate, educate and ultimately manipulate the individuals for quitting tobacco. This plan of action majorly consist of the harmful effects of the tobacco use on their pocket, family, health and their other loved ones. The plan also includes the positive changes that they would be able to encounter in their lives after quitting of the tobacco. It was found that most of the tobacco addicts were more interested to hear about and experience the positive changes that they can encounter after quitting tobacco. Many of the addicts were also advised to undergo a trial period of about one week to one month and experience the magic of quitting tobacco. The results were commendable.^{9,10}

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TOBACCO CESSATION PROTOCOL

The protocol that is to be followed for the tobacco cessation by the following five steps:¹⁰

- **Analyzing the tobacco usage of all individuals** - Tobacco use of all patients, both new and returning should be assessed by asking questions about the current use of all tobacco products, previous quit attempts, and current readiness to quit.
- **Relating oral health findings to tobacco use** - Either while or after the examination of the oral cavity by different dental professionals, the patient should be educated in various ways about the different harmful effects of the tobacco use, which may include various photographs, videos, etc. after that the analysis so made of the oral cavity of the patient is recorded in the patient's chart.
- **Manipulating patients to completely quit tobacco**- Proper and effective education, motivation and support should be provided to the patient by the various dental professionals to help him/her quit all forms of tobacco. This can be done by sending warning signals and reminders that will be helpful for the patient who are ready to quit. The education, so given to them, will provide them with the full knowledge about the harmful effects of active as well as passive smoking.
- **Supplying self-help materials to patients** - Written cessation guides and motivational videos should be given to the patients so that they read at their home.
- **Encouraging patients via follow-up**- Feedback to patients should be provided to the patients on regular basis either by adopting different means of communication, whichever is suitable for the individual. It is important to praise adolescents and young adults who do not use tobacco and encourage continued non-use.

DENTAL PROFESSIONALS IN TOBACCO CESSATION

Pediatric dentist can take initiative to conduct school-based tobacco prevention programs with an aim to educate the adolescents about the health risk of tobacco consumption, risk of addiction and benefits of tobacco cessation.¹¹

Periodontists were more actively involved in tobacco cessation practice compared with other dentists. The major reason being the lack of knowledge of the direct relationship between the periodontal health status of the smoker and the various periodontal diseases. Smoking cessation interventions can substantially improve periodontal health and the outcome of periodontal treatment.¹¹

Public health Dentist can write articles about benefits of tobacco control, participate in talk shows, demonstrations, discussions and link with Government and Non-government organizations to involve youth in

anti-tobacco advocacy. The focus should not be only on primary prevention, that is not only on discouraging young people from taking up the habit but also on providing help and support for those who wish to quit tobacco usage. Apart from giving overall health education about the oral health and the overall health of the body and also about the hazardous effects of the tobacco use, by various means of communication. They also help in the following way:-^{11,12}

- referring the tobacco users to counseling centers and do the follow-up.
- identifying the high-risk groups like young adults and pregnant women and supporting them to stop tobacco use.
- helping in monitoring the action against smoking and other forms of tobacco use at a local level in order to promote implementation through community participation.
- periodic surveillance.

Thus, public health dentist should be strongly motivated for the cause of tobacco cessation; only then, the efforts toward cessation will be fruitful.^{11,12}

A few recommendations to overcome the identified barriers and facilitate greater involvement from the dental team are as follows:-^{11,13}

- Dental care professionals should be vigilant in monitoring the patient's tobacco status, particularly the possible synergistic effects.
- Dentists should be able to prescribe nicotine replacement therapy to patients as a part of their dental care plan.
- Tobacco cessation interventions can be formulated as mandatory continued professional development for dental care professionals.
- Better links must be established between the local stop-smoking services and dental practices.
- Dentists, dental hygienists, treatment co-ordinators and nurses should facilitate cessation advice by providing incentives to the patients
- Developing a scheme where dental practices have access to smoking cessation kits that can be provided to patients.
- Providing more dental-specific patient literature on the effects of tobacco use on oral health and ways to quit.

CONCLUSION

The dental health professionals are now-a-days gaining respect and popularity because of their contribution to the society, not only in the terms of doctor but also as an activist to provide and educate different sectors of the society with the prompt knowledge about the oral and overall health of the body. Because of this people have started believing on the dental professionals. It has been observed that the long hours of the treatment and the repetitive visits to the dentist have made it possible to encounter and analyze the oral health of the patient and, thus, guide him at every step possible.

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