

Attitude and Training Needs among Health Students towards Tobacco Use

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Abstract

Tobacco use is one of the formidable health threats the world has ever faced. There are more than one billion smokers in the world. Overall, the use of tobacco products is increasing, although it is decreasing in high-income countries. It kills 5.4 million people a year and accounts for one in 10 adult deaths worldwide. If current trends continue, there will be more than eight million by 2030, up to one billion deaths in the 21st century and about 80 percent of these deaths will occur in the developing world. The health professionals can take part in varying roles in tobacco control for health of the society. A cross sectional survey was conducted among nursing and pharmacy students using globally acclaimed questionnaire from Global Health Professional Survey. The study was conducted among 141 respondents from Nursing (n=62) and Pharmacy (n=79), in selected nursing and pharmacy colleges at Bangalore. The total population was selected through purposive sampling method. The data were systematically coded, computed and analysed using Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21.0). The attitude towards tobacco use among health professional students was very optimistic. However, further efforts should be made by providing them with the required skills and support to quit smoking successfully and to provide tobacco cessation counselling for the patients.

Tobacco use is one of the major health hazards the world faces globally. It is estimated that there are more than one billion smokers in the world. Approximately 80 percent of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18. The World Health Organisation has estimated that tobacco and its products kill over 3.5 million people worldwide every year and it is extrapolated that by the decade 2020–2030, tobacco will kill 10 million people a year (WHO, 2004).

Smoking has a great economic burden by causing a decrease of economic productivity and high health care expenditures in addition to the cost of tobacco (Ruff et al, 2000). The rate of smoking had increased by 32 percent among 18 to 24 years old adults in the USA (Torabi et al, 2002). Studying smoking behaviour and attitude among sampling population will add valuable information. Knowledge about identified socio environmental factors associated with smoking among college students in developing countries

is limited. Tobacco use among health professionals is of particular importance in the area of tobacco-associated surveillance since they are not only accountable for primary health care and education for tobacco-related problems such as cessation and exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke, but are also role models in the community. In addition, the preface of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) emphasises the role of health professional bodies in efforts to include tobacco control in the public health agenda and contribute actively to the reduction of tobacco utilisation. These actions are also described in the Code of Practice for Health Professionals which has been officially adopted now by several Health Professional Associations worldwide (WHO, 2004). Since 1987, WHO has been sponsoring World No Tobacco Day to encourage countries to implement comprehensive programmes to reduce tobacco use. Involvement of health professionals in tobacco control is very important and in 2005, the theme of World No Tobacco Day 2005 was 'Health Professionals against tobacco'. Hence, the researchers attempted to identify the health professional students' attitudes and training needs towards the

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tobacco use and cessation, in order to improve the health care services in the society.

Objectives

The study was conducted to assess the attitude of health professional students regarding tobacco use, and to determine the practice of curriculum/ training in their educational institutions towards tobacco use.

Methodology

Study design used for the present study was descriptive research design, cross sectional survey in approach. The researchers identified and selected one Pharmacy and one Nursing college limited to 3rd year students; all of them were included in the survey. The Global Health Professions Student Survey (GHPSS) was conducted by census approach during regular class sessions, with pre-planned intimation. The GHPSS is part of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System, which collects data through four surveys: the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, Global School Personnel Survey, Global Adult Tobacco Survey, and GHPSS. The GHPSS is a school-based survey of 3rd year students pursuing advanced de-

grees in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and nursing.

The GHPSS uses a core questionnaire on demographics, prevalence of cigarette smoking and use of other tobacco products, exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS), desire to quit smoking, and training received to provide patient counselling on cessation techniques. The subjects were selected for the present study as per the inclusion criteria; a total of 141 subjects (Nursing, n1=62; Pharmacy, n2=79) were selected. Data was mobilised in January 2014 by the investigators at each site, following the permission from concerned authorities.

The students were briefed about the purpose of the research and invited to participate in the survey, assurance was given about anonymity and confidentiality of the information to be provided. The present GHPSS survey was conducted in colleges during regular lectures and class sessions. Primary data were collected, systematically coded, computed and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency & percentage), using SPSS 21.0 and Windows 7 version in accordance with the study objectives.

Results

Table 1 reveals that majority (85%) of the health professionals reported that there should be a complete ban of the advertising of Tobacco products. Further, 82 percent desired that smoking in all enclosed public places to be banned, 94 percent expressed that the Health professionals should get specific training on cessation techniques, 80 percent of the professionals accepted that Health professionals serve as 'role models' for their patients and the public, 91 percent said that health professionals should routinely advise their smoker patients to quit smoking, 90 percent showed their positive attitude like Health professionals routinely advise their patients who use other tobacco products to quit using these products, 92 percent said that they have a role in giving advice or information about smoking cessation to patients, 79 percent accepted that the

Table 1 : Attitude of professional students towards tobacco use

Parameters	Responses	Nursing	Pharmacy	Total	%
		f (%)	f (%)		
Tobacco sales to adolescents be banned	Yes	46 (33)	73 (52)	119	85
	No	16 (12)	6 (4)	22	16
There should be complete ban of the advertising of tobacco products	Yes	50 (35)	66 (47)	116	82
	No	12 (9)	13 (9)	25	18
Smoking in all enclosed public places to be banned	Yes	56 (40)	70 (59)	126	89
	No	6 (4)	9 (7)	15	11
Health professionals should get specific training on cessation techniques	Yes	55 (39)	77 (55)	132	94
	No	7 (5)	2 (1)	9	6
Health professionals serve as "role models" for their patients and the public	Yes	52 (37)	61 (43)	113	80
	No	10 (7)	18 (13)	28	20
Health professionals should routinely advise their patients who smoke to quit smoking	Yes	57 (40)	72 (51)	129	91
	No	5 (4)	7 (5)	12	9
Health professionals routinely advise their patients who use other tobacco products to quit using these products	Yes	54 (38)	73 (52)	127	90
	No	8 (6)	6 (4)	14	10
Health professionals have a role in giving advice or information about smoking cessation to patients	Yes	58 (41)	72 (51)	130	92
	No	4 (3)	7 (5)	11	8
The patient's chances of quitting smoking increase if a health professional advises him or her to quit	Yes	53 (38)	59 (41)	112	79
	No	9 (7)	20 (14)	29	21

patient's chances of quitting the smoking increased if a health professional advises him or her to quit.

Table 2 reveals that majority (91%) of the health professionals said that dangers about the smoking were taught in classes, 77 percent expressed the reasons why people smoke to be discussed in the Class, 81 percent learnt that it is important to record tobacco use history as part of a patient's general medical history. Only 52 percent of the health professionals revealed that they ever received any formal training in smoking cessation approaches to use with patients but 72 percent of the professionals said that it is important to provide educational materials to support smoking cessation to patients who want to quit smoking, 68 percent said that they ever heard of using nicotine replacement therapies in tobacco cessation programmes (such as nicotine patch or gum), only 55 percent had heard of using antidepressants in tobacco cessation programmes.

Discussion

Health professionals have a unique responsibility in tobacco control in the public. Whether a

physician's individual tobacco use behaviour affects their professional attitude and clinical activities remain unknown, yet it represents an important issue in public health policy, as health professionals are usually seen as primary health care providers. However, health professionals also have responsibility to reduce the occurrence of tobacco use among their patients, and they may have not yet maximised their efforts in meeting the tobacco epidemic. Health professionals have a certain responsibility as being role models for patients with regard to healthy behaviour (Mohanty et al, 2009).

In the present study, 85 percent of the subjects said that tobacco sales should be banned for adolescents. Majority (94%) of the study subjects said that health professional students should get specific training on cessation technique and also, 91 percent accepted that health professional students should routinely advise their patients regarding smoking cessation. These findings are similar to those of Adriaanse & van Reek (1989) who reported 84.66 percent and Shah (2005) who found it to be 91 percent. Similarly, Georges et al (2009) found that more than 90 percent of the same students wanted this type of training to be included in their formal curricula.

WHO (2009) found that 88.8 percent thought health professionals have a role in giving advice about smoking cessation to patients; 83.9 percent thought health professionals should get specific training on cessation techniques (WHO, 2009). Nearly 52 percent reported that they had received formal training during their professional course. This information calls for the development and implementation of training materials and curricula for health professionals, more so because it has been demonstrated that health care professionals who had received training were more likely to perform tasks of smoking cessation than untrained controls. Sinha et al (2010) concluded in his study that nursing (37.6%), and pharmacy (29.0%) students had received learning cessation approaches to use on their patients. Georges et al (2009) found in his study about those who received training ranged from 19.8 percent of pharmacy

Table 2 : Curriculum Training (during nursing, and pharmacy training)

Parameters	Responses	Nursing	Pharmacy	Total	Percent
		f (%)	f (%)		
Dangers about the smoking were taught in class	Yes	59 (42)	70 (49)	129	91
	No	3 (2)	9 (7)	12	9
The reasons why people smoke was discussed in the Class	Yes	50 (35)	58 (42)	108	77
	No	12 (9)	21 (14)	33	23
Learnt that it is important to record tobacco use history as part of a patient's general medical history	Yes	59 (42)	55 (39)	114	81
	No	3 (2)	24 (17)	27	19
Ever received any formal training in smoking cessation approaches to use with patients	Yes	37 (26)	37 (26)	74	52
	No	25 (18)	42 (30)	67	48
it is important to provide educational materials to support smoking cessation to patients who want to quit smoking	Yes	47 (33)	55 (39)	102	72
	No	15 (11)	24 (17)	39	28
Ever heard of using nicotine replacement therapies in tobacco cessation programmes (such as nicotine patch or gum)	Yes	51 (36)	45 (32)	96	68
	No	11 (8)	34 (24)	45	32
Ever heard of using anti-depressants in tobacco cessation programmes	Yes	39 (28)	38 (27)	77	55
	No	23 (16)	41 (29)	63	45

students to 43.7 percent of nursing students. Professional training for health professional students should include courses detailing the harmful health effects of tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke, as well as training in effective tobacco counselling and tobacco-cessation treatment techniques. Curricula should include a course or supplements to existing courses specifically relevant to tobacco issues.

Some limitations of the current study are: the questionnaire study design, with self-reported data, could have led to under- or over-reporting and recall bias. The extent of this bias cannot be determined from the data that were collected. Additionally, as the GHPSS methods includes only third year students of their course, the findings may not be generalised.

Suggestions for further researchers:

Similar study could be replicated on large sample. Prospective longitudinal studies can be conducted. Comparative study may be conducted at various course levels. The training needs of the female students could be compared with the needs of male students. The effectiveness of information booklet and training can be assessed.

Implications to Nursing

Nursing practice: The findings of the study can be used by nurses to design and develop educational interventional strategies.

Nursing education: Nurses can be trained to provide educational services to health professionals, public and patients regarding tobacco use and cessation.

Nursing administration: Nurse administrator can conduct refresher courses and workshop for nurses to update their knowledge thereby improving the quality of life in patients and health professionals.

Nursing research: By pursuing research, nurse could contribute towards enriching knowledge about psychosocial problems and attitude of health professionals towards the smokers.

Conclusion

Health professionals play a major role in tobacco use control and cessation and it becomes their duty to promote general health and healthy lifestyles among their patients. Effective cessation programmes to reduce tobacco use among

students need to be promoted. Improved curricula and institution-based training programmes on tobacco use cessation approaches are to be introduced. Knowledge of harmful effects of tobacco and also cessation aids are to be strengthened among health professionals, which will help them to effectively guide their patients to become tobacco free.

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