

ORIGINAL PAPER

A Study of Patients' Smoking Habits in a Psychiatric Hospital

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Abstract

Background: Global smoking-related mortality is predicted to increase rapidly. The close and complex relationship between smoking and psychiatric disorders exposes smokers with mental illness to increased smoking-related risks. The prevalence of cigarette smoking is significantly higher among patients with psychiatric illnesses than among general population. Our study aimed at finding the mental health patients' views and attitudes regarding their smoking habits.

Methods: Inpatients of a large psychiatric hospital were studied (March-June 2012), using a semi-structured interview based on Dickens' et al (2005) questionnaire enriched with demographic/medical file data and smoking profile. Of the eligible 100 patients, 80 (80%) agreed to participate after giving their signed consent. Statistical analysis was performed by using descriptive statistics (means and frequencies).

Results: The sample was male (67.5%), with mean age 52.6 (\pm 12.9) years old, with schizophrenia (50%), schizoaffective (15%) and bipolar (7.5%) disorders. All the participants were current smokers consuming 27.4 (\pm 13.4) cigarettes per day. All our patients have thought to give up smoking and need help in doing so (70%). Smoky atmosphere on the ward and seeing staff/other patients smoking are barriers to quitting. Participants (47.5%) thought that staff should be allowed to smoke with patients.

Conclusions: Psychiatric care staff should consider whether their own smoking behavior undermines their patients' attempts to stop smoking. Smokers should be regularly offered help and encouragement to quit. Healthcare providers should tailor their treatment approaches accordingly.

Keywords: smoking, mental patients, attitudes & beliefs