

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Nurses' attitude and practice in providing tobacco cessation care to patients

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## Key words

Tobacco • Cessation care • United Arab Emirates • Nurses

## Summary

**Introduction.** Patients respond very positively with nurses when they talk to them about their health related problems.

**Methods.** This cross sectional study was carried out among nurses working in Gulf Medical College hospital and Research centre, Ajman, UAE to assess the their attitude in providing tobacco cessation counselling or advise to their patients and potential barriers they face in providing tobacco cessation care. 108 nurses participated in the study.

**Results.** Among the nurses 87% were females, the majority were aged between 25 and 34 years, and 46.3% had a work experience of less than 5 years. Among the nurses who participated in the survey, 99.1% felt that the hospital stay was a suitable time for nurses to create awareness on tobacco and health to the patients and had a positive attitude towards creating awareness on tobacco and health to the patients. Only 0.9% had a negative attitude towards

creating awareness on tobacco and health and they felt that patients might not listen to them. All nurses, irrespective of their socio-demographic characteristics had a positive attitude to motivating patients to quit tobacco use. Currently, 70.4% regularly advise their patients to avoid tobacco products. Potential barriers pointed out by nurses were: lack of time (6.3%) patients may not appreciate it (90.6%) and not part of their job (3.1%).

**Conclusion.** The study concludes that nurses have a positive attitude in providing tobacco cessation care to their patients and they can utilize their unique knowledge and know-how to promote tobacco cessation and prevent the spread of this public health crisis. Providing advice and support for tobacco cessation by nurses would increase the chance of patients stopping tobacco use. This will create an enabling environment and greater potential for public health persons to fight the epidemic with greater vigour.

## Introduction

Worldwide, more than one billion people smoke [1], 1 out of 10 youths smoke, and 50% of youths are exposed to tobacco smoke in public places [2]. Five million tobacco-related deaths occur every year. If this trend continues, by 2030 more than 8 million people will die annually because of tobacco use [3]. Tobacco control is essential to reduce morbidity and mortality due to tobacco-related diseases and it will also improve the quality of life of the people living in this country. A study by the World Health Organization (WHO) has found that smoking is on the rise in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), especially among men. The WHO report says, 24% of males aged between 13 and 15 years, and as many as 42% of males aged 17 years, are currently smoking tobacco. Additionally, 20% of the UAE total male population are smokers, and nearly 3% of adult females are smokers. The study warns that smokers are not taking the risk of heart and lung disease seriously enough [4]. Nurses represent the largest group of health professionals who spend the greatest amount of time in contact with patients and the general public. It follows then that nurses need to be fully involved in reducing tobacco-related morbidity and mortality [5]. Nurses can effectively deliver evidence-based interventions for tobacco depend-

ency that can significantly reduce tobacco use [6]. Nurses involvement in community action, helping patients quit, promoting an environment free of tobacco smoke, and supporting effective tobacco control policies is essential to solve this problem [7]. Nurses must provide leadership in these efforts, along with other healthcare professionals [8, 9]. Moreover, they can play a crucial role in influencing the smoking habits of their patients. Nurses play a pivotal role in implementing tobacco cessation strategies in healthcare settings, relatively little is known of their attitudes and beliefs about giving tobacco cessation advice. Health Professionals are placed in a better position to give tobacco cessation care to their patients who uses tobacco products and that allows them to have an important role on tobacco control. Health Professionals and especially nurses can be involved in the preventive domain of tobacco control. Nurses have a great opportunity to help patients change their behaviour, give advice, guidance, give answers to questions related to the consequences of tobacco use and they can help patients to quit tobacco use.

Tobacco use causes damage and disease in almost every major organ system and is the most serious risk factor for morbidity and death among adults worldwide. Tobacco cessation care is the most cost-effective intervention method in tobacco control and can be achieved

very easily through joint actions. Nurses also have the opportunity to caution children and adolescents of the hazards of tobacco use. By advocating tobacco cessation care nurses can strengthen the position they have on tobacco control. The effects of tobacco are obviously seen by nurses working in each specialty in any healthcare settings. Nurses can have an active and assertive role in tobacco control at a local, national and international level. Nurses can take positive action toward tobacco control in numerous ways: by increasing awareness of the need for tobacco control; initiating personal action such as education and contacting legislators; and supporting public action through joining groups or coalitions whose efforts are directed at tobacco control. This article focuses on tobacco as a global health issue with implications for nursing practice, education, research, and policy development. This study was conducted to assess the attitude and practice in providing tobacco cessation care to patients and also to determine the potential barriers in providing tobacco cessation care to patients.

## Methods

All nurses working in the Gulf Medical College Hospital & Research Centre, a tertiary teaching hospital with 250 beds in the Ajman Emirate, UAE participated in this cross-sectional survey and filled in self-administered anonymous questionnaires focused on their attitude and practice towards participation in anti-tobacco activities. A simple paper questionnaire was developed to assess nurses' attitudes and practice in the provision of smoking cessation care. The pilot tested, structured, close ended questionnaire included items that assessed demographic data; attitudes to tobacco cessation; current practice with regard to tobacco cessation care; potential barriers in tobacco cessation; smoking cessation activity and if they had received any smoking cessation training. One hundred and eight questionnaires were distributed to nurses after obtaining verbal informed consent. This survey was conducted over a period of three months (i.e. from March to May 2009). The data collected were entered into an excel spreadsheet and then transferred to PASW-17 for statistical analysis. Chi-square test was used to analyze the association between the two variables.

## Results

### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The participants (108) were predominantly females (87%). With regard to the age range, 66.7% were between 25 and 34 years, 21.3% were over 34 years and 12% were younger than 25 years. A total of 70.4% of the participants were married and 29.6% were single. Among the respondents 46.3% had worked in the area of nursing for less than 5 years, 38% between 5 to 10 years and 15.7% for more than 10 years. The mean duration of work experience as practice nurses was 6.8 years. The details are available in Table I.

### KNOWLEDGE ON TOBACCO CESSATION AND TOBACCO CESSATION CLINIC

In terms of knowledge regarding tobacco cessation care, 92.6% of the participants had heard about tobacco cessation and 7.4% had not. Among males, 21.4% had not heard about tobacco cessation whereas among females this rate was 5.3%. Among participants above the age of 30, 11.1% percent had never heard about tobacco cessation care, whereas in those who were younger 30, this percentage went down to 3.7%. Among participants with a work experience of less than 10 years 7.8% had never heard about tobacco cessation care, whereas those with more than 10 years of experience 5.9% had never heard about tobacco cessation care. The details are given in Table II.

### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TOBACCO CESSATION CLINIC

Among those who had heard about tobacco cessation, 69% were aware of the importance of the tobacco cessation clinic. Awareness about the importance of the tobacco cessation clinic with regard to the age group, 64.8% were younger than 30 years, whereas 63% were older more than 30. Among females, 64.9% and among males, 57.1% knew about the importance of the tobacco cessation clinic. Sixty-six percent of those who had a working experience of less than 10 years, and 53% of

Tab. I. Socio demographic characteristics of participants.

Variable	Group	Number	%
Gender	Male	14	13.0
	Female	94	87.0
Religion	Muslim	6	5.6
	Christian	78	72.2
	Hindu	20	18.5
Age (in years)	< 25	13	12.0
	25-29	41	38.0
	30-34	31	28.7
	> 34	23	21.3
Experience (in years)	< 5	50	46.3
	5-10	41	38.0
	> 10	17	15.7
Marital status	Single	32	29.6
	Married	76	70.4

Tab. II. Details of participants with regard to lack of knowledge about tobacco cessation.

Variables	Group	Lack of knowledge about tobacco cessation	
		Number	%
Gender	Male	3	21.4
	Female	5	5.3
Age group	< 30 years	2	3.7
	≥ 30 years	6	11.1
Work experience	< 10 years	7	7.7
	≥ 10 years	1	5.9

those who had a working experience of more than 10 years, knew about the importance of tobacco cessation clinic. The details are given in Table III.

#### NURSES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TOBACCO CESSATION CARE

Among the participants, 51.9% had not attended tobacco cessation training programmes however; the vast majority (91.1%) of the nurses were enthusiastic to take part in in-service tobacco cessation training programmes. The potential barriers to the lack of interest shown to attend tobacco cessation training programmes were lack of time (60%), not interested (20%) and 20% felt that patients would not listen to them (Fig. 1).

Among the nurses who participated in the survey, 99.1% felt that the hospital stay was a useful environment for nurses to raise awareness on tobacco and health in their patients and had a positive attitude towards raising

awareness on tobacco and health in patients. Only 0.9% had a negative attitude towards raising awareness on tobacco and health and felt that patients would not listen to them. In addition to this, 93.5% of the nurses were willing to provide education on the ill effects of tobacco use also to the patients' next of kin. The rest of the nurses said that they could not provide this type of education to the patients' next of kin due to the lack of time.

All participants were of the opinion that it is necessary to motivate all patients who use tobacco products. All nurses, irrespective of the socio-demographic characteristics had a positive attitude towards motivating their patients to give up smoking. Among the participants, 88.9% stated that diseases related to tobacco use were increasing and all nurses felt that there was the need to raise awareness on the ill effects of side-stream smoke to the general public.

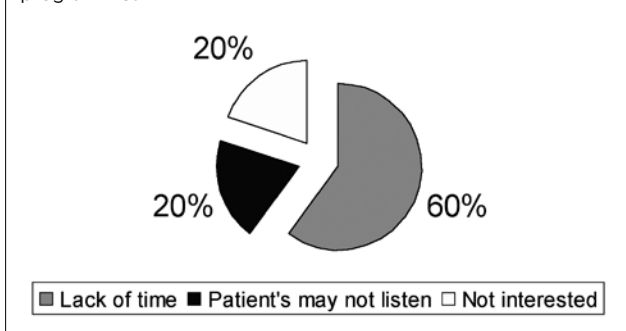
#### ADVISING PATIENTS TO AVOID TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Of the participants, 70.4% regularly advised their patients to avoid tobacco products. With regard to gender and advice to avoid tobacco use, among females, 71.3% and among males 64.3% advised their patients to avoid tobacco use. Of the participants who were younger than 30, 72.2% agreed with the practice of advising patients to avoid tobacco products, while those above 30 years of age this figure went down to 68.5%. Among participants who had a working experience of > 10 years, 76.5% advised their patients to avoid tobacco products, whereas participants with a working experience of less than 10 years, 69.3% advised their patients to avoid using of tobacco products. The details are summarized in Table IV. Patients' reaction towards tobacco cessation care was elicited in detail: 53.9% of the patients resented to their advice; 26.3% were receptive and 5.3% had no reaction. Among those nurses who were not practicing tobacco cessation care, 6.3% opined lack of time, 90.6% were of the opinion that patients would not accept it and 3.1% opined that it was not part of their job.

Tab. III. Participants according to demographic characteristics and knowledge about the importance of tobacco cessation clinic.

Variables	Group	Importance of tobacco cessation clinic	
		Number	%
Gender	Male	8	57.1
	Female	61	64.9
Age group	< 30 years	35	64.8
	≥ 30 years	34	63.0
Work experience	< 10 years	60	66.0
	≥ 10 years	9	53.0

Fig. 1. Potential barriers to attend tobacco cessation training programmes.



Tab. IV. Socio demographic characteristics and advice to avoid tobacco products.

Variables	Group	Advice to avoid tobacco use	
		Number	%
Gender	Male	9	64.3
	Female	67	71.3
Age group	< 30 years	39	72.2
	≥ 30 years	37	68.5
Work experience	< 10 years	63	69.2
	≥ 10 years	13	76.5

#### Discussion

The current study provides information on nurses' attitude and practice in providing tobacco cessation care in the hospital to patients, as well as the potential barriers to adopt tobacco cessation care in routine nursing care. A study conducted by Nagle et al. and Salter et al. among nurses reported that attitudes and knowledge towards smoking and smoking cessation have an important effect on assessing smoking status, giving brief advice, and the provision or referral for smoking cessation treatment by health professionals [10, 11]. A survey among New Zealand midwives found that although the majority sees the provision of advice as an integral part of their job, only half provided this advice to pregnant women who smoked [12].

The most important inference is that any nurse-training programme should discuss and promote tobacco cessation care in health care settings. This can be incorporated

in the policy documents of leading nursing organizations in this part of the country. Among those who have not received training on tobacco cessation care in the present study, the majority were enthusiastic to attend this sort of training. This observation is in accordance with the observation made by Hall et al. [13]. The potential barriers to the lack of interest shown in attending tobacco cessation training programmes were lack of time, no interest and that patients would not be willing to listen to them. All participants in the present study had a positive attitude towards motivating their patients to quit tobacco use. These findings are in accordance with the study conducted by Hall et al. and Borelli et al. [13, 14]. All nurses in the present study perceived that hospital setting was an appropriate venue to motivate patients to quit tobacco use. A study conducted by McCarty et al. reported that 63% of the participants believed that hospitalization was an ideal time for patients to try to quit smoking, and 59% believed a nurse had an obligation to advise patients to quit smoking [15]. A study by Houghton et al. observed that the identified barriers to tobacco cessation intervention included lack of time to intervene and a lack of training. Interest in learning more about tobacco interventions was high among the participants [16]. The findings of the present study suggest that nurses have a positive attitude towards providing tobacco cessation care to patients. The hospital administrators can utilize this by allowing a provision of preventive care while on duty.

In the present study, the majority of practice nurses advised tobacco cessation to patients using tobacco products. Lally et al. conducted a study among nurses in six countries and they found that only 50% reported discussing cessation with their patients that smoke [17]. A study conducted by Houghton et al. observed that almost all respondents (92%) routinely reported that they asked their patients if they smoke cigarettes, and the majority felt that it was their responsibility to advise their patients to quit smoking [16]. A cross-sectional study conducted by Chan et al., among nurses in China observed that only a third routinely assisted patients' attempts to quit smoking [18]. A study conducted by Andy McEwen and Robert West observed that 95% of the nurses advised patients to stop at least occasionally; 71% said they advised smokers to stop at most or all consultations [19].

However, a substantial minority held a number of negative beliefs towards providing tobacco cessation advice to their patients. In the present study, among the participants who were not advising patients on tobacco cessation, the potential barriers identified were the lack of time, that patients would not be interested and that it is not part of their job. Houghton et al. in his study observed that the identified barriers to intervention included lack of time to intervene and lack of training [16].

The findings also suggest that in-service training programmes on tobacco cessation care would help nurses to provide better care in tobacco cessation. Training should incorporate current data on tobacco related diseases, importance of tobacco cessation care by nurses, success stories of tobacco cessation etc. Moreover, this can be included in the undergraduate nursing curricula with emphasis on the importance of nurses as non-tobacco user role models.

## Conclusion

Nurses see millions of people everyday in healthcare settings and situations. Nurses in the UAE can play a role in making a difference in the nation's efforts to combat the tobacco epidemic, seeking to foster the pivotal role of nurses in tobacco control. People respond very positively when a nurse takes time to talk to them about the need to stop smoking for their own health and the health of their families. On the whole, practice nurses have a positive attitude towards motivating patients to quit tobacco use. Therefore, they can be at the forefront of tobacco control at local, national and international level, in collaboration with other professional agencies, both governmental and non-governmental. The study concludes that nurses can utilize their unique knowledge and know-how to promote cessation and prevent the spread of this public health crisis. Providing advice and support for tobacco cessation by nurses would increase the chances of patients giving up tobacco use. It will create an enabling environment and greater potential for public health to fight against the epidemic. Thus, the authors feel that nurses can make a difference in tobacco control in the United Arab Emirates.

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