
IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAMME 'THE SMOKERS' GROUP' IN PSYCHIATRIC INPATIENTS

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Introduction: Nicotine dependence is significantly more prevalent in patients with mental illness, e.g. 60% in affective and 60%-90% in schizophrenia spectrum disorders, than in the general population (about 30%). Smoking not only causes physical diseases and increases mortality, but also negatively affects psychiatric disorders.

Objectives/Aims: To evaluate the acceptance, practicability and efficacy of a programme to help psychiatric patients quit or reduce smoking and to characterise smoking psychiatric inpatients.

Methods: 'The smokers' group' is a voluntary, manualised, behaviour therapy group programme adapted to the special needs of psychiatric inpatients. It consists of six 75-minute open-group sessions. We recorded the smoking status of all psychiatric patients and evaluated the programme with standardised questionnaires.

Results: In July 2012, 49.2% (116/236) of inpatients were active smokers (55% of men, 45% of women). From July 2012 to December 2013, 113 patients (56% women, 44% men; mean age 46 years) participated in ≥ 1 programme sessions. Median duration of smoking was 21 years and mean physical dependence was severe (5 on the FTND). Of those who completed ≥ 3 sessions, 23% (n=26) roughly halved their cigarette consumption (from 22 to 10 cigarettes/d). Thirty-six (31%) stopped smoking, 30 with nicotine replacement. Eleven patients were abstinent after the programme, as verified by expired carbon monoxide.

Conclusions: Although smoking cessation is often difficult for psychiatric inpatients, they showed interest in the programme. About a third reduced or even stopped smoking. Adherence (high drop-out rate due to discharge and completely voluntary participation) and long-term follow-up require further attention.