



School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Research Project

SMOKING CESSATION IN GENERAL PRACTICE AMONG DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

Are you a general practitioner or practice nurse in a regional and rural area? Would you like to join our research team in a before/after study designed to assess the effectiveness of the Webquit intervention to reduce smoking and improve depression among general practice patients? Professor Robyn Richmond is offering 6, 12 or 18 UOC research projects to GP or PN Masters students enrolled in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine. We are enrolling patients who are smokers with depression who attend general practices in regional or rural areas.

This project represents an innovative approach to addressing the common and important co-existing problems of nicotine dependence and depression. The intervention brings together an evidence-based and previously tested program of CBT and motivational enhancement therapy to address depression along with modules on smoking cessation and combines these with individualised support and pharmacological therapy provided by the patient's general practice team (PN and GP). This approach integrates internet-based support with care in the person's own general practice and has the potential of both increasing intervention uptake and effectiveness and reaching a large number of depressed smokers at a much lower cost than face-to-face psychological treatment. The intervention addresses the needs of the increasing proportion of smokers who have mental health issues complicating their nicotine dependence and who are a population currently missing out on the health benefits of reduced smoking in the Australian community.

As part of the Webquit program we have developed modules for smoking cessation, reducing depression and modification of other lifestyle issues which are delivered via the internet. Webquit is novel in that it addresses both depression and nicotine dependence concurrently and is facilitated by the practice nurse in collaboration with the GP.

Depression and nicotine dependence commonly co-exist. Between 30 and 60% of people presenting for treatment of nicotine dependence have a history of depression and they experience greater difficulty in quitting smoking. The rates of both depression and smoking are higher in rural and remote Australia and among Indigenous Australians. The majority of care for this vulnerable group is provided in general practice.

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