

Introduction

The effects of tobacco are well documented, but despite a wealth of evidence and education, Americans continue to smoke at alarming rates. According to the American Lung Association (ALA, 2009) over 45 million Americans over the age of 45 smoked in 2006 accounting for 43 percent of all adult smokers. Tobacco use is a widespread problem with serious physical, emotional, and social consequences. Studies reveal that cigarette smoking is: (a) a strong risk factor for premature death, (b) the leading preventable risk factor for many chronic conditions, and (c) the most harmful form of tobacco use. Loss in work productivity, approximately \$97 billion annually, has also been associated with smoking (CDC, 2009). Smoking is now recognized not just as a bad habit or a lifestyle choice but as tobacco dependence (Sarna & Bialous, 2006).

Since the mid twentieth century tobacco use has been a critical health care issue but tobacco use has received little attention in nursing. Despite the efficacy of nurses in providing tobacco cessation interventions, nurses have been less visible than other healthcare professionals in research and public policy. While smoking is a complex behavior, nurses have the potential to influence client behaviors and public policies concerning tobacco use. Malone (2006) noted, “Although some individual nurses have carried the antitobacco banner... there is little evidence that nursing as a profession has sought seriously to address tobacco use and control in a sustained and systematic way” (p. 53). This invisibility of nursing is confusing considering the involvement of nurses in other areas of health promotion.

According to Gardner and Brandt (2006) promotion by the tobacco industry is the single most important initiator of cigarette smoking. Cigarette advertisers have identified emotional and

psychological needs of smokers and have relied on clusters of values and lifestyle preferences to develop brand images that are psychologically, emotionally, and socially relevant to users. Cigarette producers have ignored the harm caused by cigarettes and have engaged for decades in efforts to silence critics, distort science, influence public opinion and control policy (Yussuf & Dagi, 2000). Without effective research, legislation, and tobacco control the smoking prevalence across all levels of socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity will triple over the next generation (Andrews & Heath, 2003). There is a need to encourage student nurses and current nurses to be strong and formidable opponents of the tobacco industry.

Tobacco Use and Nursing Education

Nurses witness the effects of tobacco use in their clients and their families on a daily basis. Developing future nurses with the knowledge and skill to combat tobacco use should be an emphasis within nursing education today. Teaching nursing students to become actively involved in tobacco control and public policy is a responsibility of schools of nursing across the nation. Within nursing curricula students should be made aware of the current knowledge regarding smoking and the smoking cessation field, as well as available smoking cessation resources. Student nurses need to be empowered with the knowledge necessary to fight the tobacco epidemic.

Those responsible for educating nursing students need to consider how information about smoking is incorporated into nursing education. Within nursing curricula there is a need to create and implement a program that includes nicotine dependency and smoking cessation. Not only would this promote cessation among nursing students who already smoke, but it would also help to prevent the uptake of smoking that has been shown to occur in nursing schools across the

United States (Smith, 2010). While all nursing curricula include disease processes that result from smoking and tobacco use there is a lack of information available on how to intervene with clients at various developmental levels.

It is further necessary to incorporate into nursing curriculum ways of providing students information about the effects of tobacco use, exposure to second hand smoke, and prevention of tobacco use. Nursing students need to be provided science-based strategies for tobacco dependence treatment, practice opportunities to ensure competence in tobacco control and cessation interventions and resources that are available for nicotine dependent clients. A greater emphasis within nursing programs needs to be placed on the nurses' role in smoking health promotion. Undergraduate nursing programs should incorporate strategies to assist student nurses in becoming effective health educators for all clients.

Nursing is a stressful, challenging and demanding profession but it has become necessary to incorporate tobacco control programs. Through daily contact with clients, nurses are positioned to detect which clients are smokers and to whom quitting advice could be provided (Smith, 2010). Nurses represent role models for communities and must become advocates for smoking cessation and tobacco control.

Nurses have such a large presence not only in healthcare facilities, but in factories, homes and schools and it has become essential for nurses to create environments that decrease tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke. Tobacco control activities are an important issue in nursing. There is an urgent need for nurses to play a more active role in tobacco control. It is time to harness the energy of all nurses to deal with the tobacco epidemic. Both current nurses and student nurses must be trendsetters and role models for a tobacco free lifestyle.

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