

At the time of publication of this issue of *The Nicotine Challenger*, the Tobacco Dependence Clinic was reaching its second year anniversary, having seen almost 600 patients in the first two years. A full report of the clinic's activities and progress in its second year will be available in an upcoming news. The following is a summary report focusing on the clinic's first year.

Tobacco Dependence Clinic at UMDNJ-School of Public Health: Summary Report 2001-2002

Introduction

The Tobacco Dependence Clinic at UMDNJ-School of Public Health (732-235-8222) is funded by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services to provide a specialist tobacco dependence treatment service to the local community and also to provide a referral and consultation service to health professionals throughout New Jersey. The Clinic first started seeing patients in January 2001, with 230 patients attending for an assessment in that year.

Characteristics of Patients Seen

Two thirds of the patients seen in 2001 were women and three quarters lived in Middlesex County. Over a third heard about the Clinic from their health care provider, and around a quarter heard about the clinic from a friend or family member. Ninety two percent of our patients attend the Clinic for help to stop smoking, with 6% attending for help to stay stopped after a recent quit attempt and 2% seeking help to reduce their tobacco use. The typical Clinic patient in 2001 had already tried to quit smoking on at least 4 previous occasions (average = 8.5 times), smoked over a pack of cigarettes per day for over 28 years and lit up within 10 minutes of waking each morning. Almost two-thirds already had symptoms or an illness they believed was caused by smoking, over a half had previously received treatment for a mental health or emotional problem and over a quarter had previously received treatment for an alcohol or drug problem.

Types of Treatment Provided

All patients receive a comprehensive assessment including measurement of expired carbon monoxide. Most are then treated with a combination of counseling and pharmacotherapy with input from a multidisciplinary team. Over 50% attend group treatment and over 80% use medication. The average number of appointments attended is 5.4, with an average of 2.2 additional telephone consultations with the clinic.

Treatment Outcome

Two hundred and one (87%) of the patients seen in 2001 made an attempt to quit. Ninety eight patients (49%) were abstinent at one month follow-up, and an additional 35 (17%) reported cutting their cigarette consumption down by at least half. Sixty two patients (31%) remained abstinent six months after their Quit Date, and an additional 31 (15%) reduced cigarette consumption by at least 50%. Of patients surveyed 6 months after starting treatment, over 95% rated the service as "excellent" or "good".

Summary

The Clinic has made a promising start in its first year, treating over 200 patients, most of whom are highly addicted to tobacco and achieving very respectable short and long term outcomes (49% and 31% abstinence at one and six month follow-ups). For comparison, the U.S. Public Health Service Guideline reports an average long-term abstinence rate of 11% without treatment and 22% from "high intensity counseling". There has been a 60% increase in demand for the Clinic's services in 2002, with a total of over 350 patients having been assessed in that year. A significant proportion of that increased demand is fuelled by "word-of-mouth" referrals from ex-patients. The Clinic's main aims for 2003 are therefore to maintain a high standard of patient care while increasing the volume of patients seen.

(Full report at: www.tobaccoprogram.org).

New Staff at the Tobacco Dependence Program



Vanessa Patterson
Clinic Secretary

As the clinic secretary, Vanessa provides confidential secretarial and administrative support to clinic staff. Prior to joining TDP she was a research study coordinator with the Department of Neurology primarily working with patients who had Parkinson's Disease.



Anitha Varughese, LCSW
Mental Health Clinician II

Anitha Varughese has gained most of her experience working as a clinician with the severely mentally ill/MICA population at psychiatric hospitals in NY and NJ for the past 9 years. She has also worked as a psychotherapist at a counseling center helping adults and children suffering from depression, Adult Children of Alcoholics and marital problems. Anitha brings her expertise in working with the mental health population and with addictions to the Tobacco Dependence Program.

