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Section 1B

December 4, 2022

Term Paper

Throughout the years, cigarette smoking has been a common habit that is known to cause adverse effects to one’s oral hygiene and physical health. Knowing that smoking cigarettes can impact one’s overall health, some individuals continue to be reluctant to cease smoking. As a dental hygiene student, it is important for healthcare professionals, to encourage, educate and advocate the potential health risks of smoking and suggest treatments, alternatives and resources that can help guide patients with a history of smoking towards a path of cessation.

Growing up with some family members who often smoked cigarettes, it was challenging to educate and encourage the member on potential risks tobacco products has on oral and systemic health. Before E-cigarettes were introduced into the market, cigarettes were the most common tobacco product used among smokers (World Health Organization, 2022). Cigarettes is a tobacco product that is compacted with dried tobacco leaves, nicotine and other cancer causing substances such as, formaldehyde, lead, arsenic, and polonium-210, which are then shaped into a stick form (American Cancer Society, 2020). This form of tobacco product would then require the user to burn the end containing the tobacco and other substances to allow the user to then inhale the smoke containing the ingredients on the other end.

To smokers the use of tobacco may provide beneficial effects towards the individual such as reducing anxiety and depression levels (Palich, R. & Smith, S. M., 2019) However, prolong use of tobacco products can increase the risk of strokes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and all types of cancers. (CDC, 2021). In terms of oral health, cigarette smoking can increase risks of periodontal disease, tooth decay, dental caries, and tooth loss (CDC, 2020). It is important for oral healthcare professionals to provide smoking counseling to their patients during their dental hygiene visit to make sure the patient understand the adverse effects of cigarette smoking and know there are programs that can support and guide them along their journey to quit smoking.

As a dental hygiene student, when discussing this with a teenager who just started to smoke two months ago it is important to first educate the patient about the adverse effects of smoking using information from evidence based articles to support this claim. For example, studies such as, *Effects of smoking and drinking habits on the incidence of periodontal disease and tooth loss among Japanese males: a 4year longitudinal study,* is a study that explains oral health risks associated with smoking. Results from the study show how participants who quit smoking had lower risk of periodontal disease and tooth loss similar to participants who never smoked at all (Okamoto, Y. et al., 2006). Aside from studies, we can also introduce the patient with statistics and pictures showing the oral health of smokers. As for a thirty year old who has been smoking for twelve years we can educate and introduce the patient on smoking cessation by using studies such as, *Dose-dependent effect of smoking and smoking cessation on periodontitis-related tooth loss during 10-47 years periodontal maintenance- A retrospective study in compliant cohort,* to show how patient who received periodontal treatment and quit smoking over a period of 15 years had reduced the risk tooth loss due to periodontal disease (Ravida, A. et al, 2020). In addition to using the study we can show the patient their own x-rays and compare them with a nonsmoker. For both the teenage and thirty year old patient, information on treatment, withdraw symptoms and hotlines that may assists with smoking cessation should be provided to the patient during their dental visit to prepare and support their choice of quitting smoking. It is also important to remind patients that it is never too late to quit smoking regardless of age and the duration they have been smoking (CDC, 2021).

From this assignment, I learned that it is never too late for a smoker to quit smoking in order to improve their health. It was interesting to learn how ex-smokers who ceased smoking over a 15 year duration had similar oral health results as to a non-smoker. This assignment has been beneficial for me, as a dental hygiene student, to better understand and prepare me on the topic of tobacco use and the importance of smoking cessation. After searching and reviewing evidence based articles for this assignment, this made me feel more comfortable to be able to use the information and convey what I learned to future patients about smoking cessation.

Overall, the use of tobacco products such as cigarettes are known to affect oral hygiene and systemic health. This can be due to the ingredients used to produce this product such as tobacco, nicotine and other cancer causing substances that make it too addictive to quit. It is important for healthcare providers, such as dental hygienists, to educate and provide the support patients may need, such as counseling, statistics, pictures, and articles, to allow them to consider the option to quit smoking.

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