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Tobacco Cessation Term Paper

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Do you know what is the number one cause of a preventable disease? Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease. Tobacco smokers also cause preventable diseases to the people they are surrounded by, which unwillingly makes them secondhand smokers. There are many ways to consume tobacco, such as smoking, chewing, and even sniffing, but the most harmful and common form of tobacco is smoking.

Many people who start smoking are either influenced by their family or relatives at a young age, or by peer pressure from friends and people around them. They unintentionally cause people around them to become a secondhand smoker, unknowingly spreading the harmful effects of smoking. Whenever a smoker exhales, people around them will inhale the byproducts, which increases their risks of getting lung cancer. Secondhand smoke affects the respiratory system, the brain, and the heart and it can lead to many diseases.

Tobacco derives from plants, and “all tobacco products emit over 7,000 chemicals, 70 of which have been identified as carcinogens.” “The act of burning a cigarette creates the majority of these chemical compounds, many of which are toxic and/or carcinogenic” (Gehrig, J.S. 2020). These toxic chemicals cause lung cancer, oral cancer, etc. Aside from having many cancer-causing compounds, tobacco also contains nicotine, which is an addictive substance that stimulates the brain and helps regulate mood and behavior.

I learned about the negative side effects of tobacco use at a young age. My father would smoke cigarettes at home, from morning until nighttime. At the time, I did not understand why there was smoke coming from his cigarettes until I saw him light them up. Whenever he smoked, it produced a smell I disliked, and it would linger in the air for a while even after he was done smoking. With him being the only smoker in my family, we all became secondhand smokers.

Sometimes the smoke would trigger my sister’s Asthma attacks. At first, we did not understand why my sister would have trouble breathing until the doctor explained one of her main triggers is from inhaling cigarette smoke. The cigarette smoke would irritate her airway and because of this, my father would smoke outside of our apartment instead.

Tobacco usage has a major impact on the oral cavity. It increases dental biofilm and increases the risks of getting periodontal diseases. The gingiva would become inflamed, and it would slow down the healing process when there are infections. According to research, “only about 20% of people older than 65 years of age who have never smoked are toothless, whereas 41.3% of daily smokers older than 65 years are toothless” (Gehrig, J. S. 2020). Smokers have a higher risk of losing their teeth than nonsmokers who have reached old age. “Smoking is a known cause of multiple cancers, accounting for at least 30% of all cases of cancer and approximately 163,700 cancer deaths every year in the United States” (Gehrig, J. S. 2020). This also applies to passive smokers.

Informing patients that quitting will benefit not just only their oral and overall health, but also the health of others around them who do not smoke. They may be unaware of secondhand and thirdhand smoking, which impacts those around them, such as significant others and family members. Thirdhand smoke is cigarette or tobacco residue that adheres to furniture, clothing, and indoor surfaces. The dentists will be able to direct patients to any cessation centers and hotlines and will be there to encourage them while they quit.

The patient should receive smoking cessation advice during their hygiene appointment, so they are aware of the harm smoking does to their gums, teeth, and overall health. Smoking damages the gums by changing their color, staining them, and creating biofilm, which can cause gum disease and dehydration. Smoking also raises the risk of head and neck cancers, with “one pack of cigarettes a day raising the risk to 25 times that of a nonsmoker” (Gehrig, J. S. 2020). Smokers have a higher risk of developing cancer than nonsmokers.

For the teenager who just started to smoke 2 months ago, ask open-ended questions, such as when and why they started smoking. Inform them of the risks behind smoking and the addiction they are getting from cigarettes with ingredients like nicotine. In the article from the JAMA network, it stated that “exposure to nicotine during adolescence can harm the developing brain, which may affect brain function and cognition, attention, and mood; thus, minimizing nicotine exposure from any tobacco product in youth is important” an important source that can be mentioned to the teenager who just started smoking.

Tell the patient, who is 30 years old and has smoked for 12 years, that it is never too late to stop, that it is a routine, and that quitting smoking could have negative effects. If you can convince smokers that quitting has major, immediate health benefits, their bodies will start to recover. Mention any potential health benefits they may experience from quitting smoking. Lung function improves by 30% after 2 weeks of quitting, and in 15 years, the risk of getting heart disease is the same as it is for nonsmokers. Smokers may have the desire to stop smoking but lack the tools and information necessary to accomplish so. Dentist hygienists can advise smokers who have been smoking for at least 12 years.

This assignment helped me realize there are smokers who want to quit but they do not know how to, reminding me of when my father claimed he wanted to quit but could not.  Because I can use the 5 A's (ask, advise, assess, assist, and arrange) and be a good listener, I will feel very at ease discussing smoking cessation with my future patients. I'll mention what I discovered while doing this assignment and advise them of the negative effects smoking can have on not just their general health but also their oral health. I can relate to my father in this assignment, thus it's helpful for me in different ways I can approach him with.

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