

Better cancer services every step of the way

Have you thought about the flu shot as an opportunity to talk about tobacco use?

Richard San Cartier is a Primary Care Nurse Practitioner for the North Shore Tribal Council. He has presented on Aboriginal tobacco cessation for CAMH's TEACH Project (Training Enhancement in Applied Cessation Counselling and Health).

Richard tries to maximize every interaction with his patients and encourages other health care workers to do the same. This year, when patients come in for flu shots, Richard will use this time as an opportunity to discuss tobacco use.

We asked Richard a few questions about his approach:

Q

Why is a flu shot appointment a good opportunity to talk to patients about tobacco use?

A

Booking a flu shot shows that the patient is motivated to protect their health. You can build on this motivation by providing patients with the knowledge and tools needed to make the decision to quit smoking commercial tobacco. Smokers may not know that the risk of upper respiratory infections is higher as a result of the use of commercial tobacco.

Q

Is there really enough time to talk about smoking during a flu shot?

A

I don't recommend intensive counselling during the flu shot – that isn't realistic. But "landmarking" and giving the needle offers approximately 10-20 seconds to begin a conversation with your patient. The goal is to establish a non-judgmental relationship with the patient, ask them about their tobacco use and assist them if and when they are ready to quit. You can also use this opportunity to identify which patients are using tobacco and follow-up with them regularly during future visits.

Q

What is the best way to start this conversation with patients?

A

- Commend the patient on getting the flu shot and protecting their health
- Ask permission to ask questions and give information
- Be open and listen – don't push the patient to change their behaviour
- Let the patient know that you are available if and when they are ready to talk about their tobacco use
- Remember establishing a relationship is key. Even if they are not ready, your actions that day will influence whether or not the patient will come see you when they are thinking of quitting.

Fact:

Smoking increases the risk of getting a cold or flu and increases the severity of a cold or flu.

Tips for smokers during the flu season and year-round

Remember to ask permission before sharing these tips with your patients:

- Avoid sharing cigarettes to prevent the spread of infection
- Avoid exposing others to second-hand smoke
- If you get the flu or cold, avoid (or reduce) smoking while you are sick.



FLU CREW



IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE INFORMATION ON HOW TO TALK TO YOUR PATIENTS ABOUT TOBACCO USE PLEASE CONTACT LUCIANA OR YVONNE AT THE ABORIGINAL TOBACCO PROGRAM
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