

Tobacco Use Related Educational Experiences and Professional Behavior: Do Dental and Dental Hygiene Students' Experiences with Tobacco Use in Their Families and among Friends Matter?

(14)

Contributing HPE Topics (Other Related)

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Background:

There is substantial evidence that tobacco use has detrimental effects on the users' health and oral health. The objectives were (a) to assess the percentages of dental and dental hygiene students who had family members and friends who used tobacco and who used tobacco themselves and (b) to investigate whether growing up with family members and friends who used vs. did not use affected the students' responses to tobacco-related education and their professional behavior related to educating patients about this topic.

Actions, Methods or Intervention:

210 dental students and 30 dental hygiene students responded to an anonymous survey.

Results:

54% of the respondents had family members who used tobacco products while they grew up and 30% had family members who were current users; 9.6% had friends in middle school, 43.8% in high school, 64.4% in college and 45.4% in dental school/dental hygiene program who used tobacco products. While 22.5% respondents used tobacco products in the past, only 5.8% used while being in their professional education program. When the average responses of students with vs. without family members who used tobacco in the past were compared, the students with family based experiences reported to having been better educated about the effects of tobacco on general health in college (5-point scale with 1=not at all: 3.46 vs 2.95; $p=0.002$) and in professional schools (4.04 vs. 3.51; $p=0.001$) and being better educated about oral health effects (4.59 vs. 3.98; $p<0.001$) than their peers without past tobacco-related family experiences. In addition, the students with these experiences were more likely to currently educate their patients about tobacco use (2.48 vs. 1.83; $p<0.001$) and the oral health effects of tobacco use (2.56 vs. 1.89; $p=0.002$) and intent to do so in the future (2.83 vs. 2.00; $p<0.001$). These differences in responses were not found when comparing the average responses of students with vs. without friends who used vs. did not use tobacco products.

Lessons Learned:

Family-based experiences with tobacco use affects students motivation to learn about this topic and engage in tobacco cessation related professional behavior during their professional education as well as in their future professional lives.

Future Application and Next Steps:

The next steps of this research is to potentially get more respondents that are dental students. Once there is more responses, this information can hopefully raise more awareness of tobacco use. With this awareness, the goal is for more dental students and dentists to achieve a deeper understanding of what influences tobacco use in individuals and to engage in tobacco cessation counseling with their own patients.

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