Smoking Cessation Counseling Program: Evaluation of Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Learning Experiences Among Filipino Pharmacists and Its Effectiveness

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Abstract

Tobacco smoking is a preventable public health threat, claiming millions of lives worldwide. Healthcare professionals, notably pharmacists, play a pivotal role in reducing tobacco use and educating smokers about its detrimental effects. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and learning experiences of Filipino pharmacists regarding a smoking cessation counseling program. Moreover, it aimed to examine the effectiveness of the smoking cessation counseling program delivered by trained pharmacists. Medical experts conducted a smoking cessation training workshop for pharmacists. A pre- and post-training survey were deployed to assess pharmacists' knowledge and attitudes. Furthermore, after the training, the skills and learning experiences were evaluated. After that, the trained smoking cessation pharmacists conducted counseling sessions via phone calls and SMS. Then, the nicotine dependence of the participants was evaluated using the Fagerstrom Test after two sessions of counseling. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the knowledge, attitudes, skills and learning experiences of the pharmacists, as well as the effectiveness of the program based on nicotine dependence. Statistical analyses employed the Wilcoxon signed-rank test with effect size calculation for non-normally distributed variables, and the independent t-test for normally distributed variables to compare the pre- and the post-intervention measurements. After the training, the pharmacists showed a significant improvement in attitudes towards the smoking cessation counseling ($\bar{x}$ =3.60 vs. $\bar{x}$=3.82; *p<0.05*), but there was no significant difference in their tobacco knowledge ($\bar{x}$=8.16 vs. $\bar{x}$=8.35; *p>0.05*). All pharmacists successfully passed the skills assessment with an average score of 92.8%. Additionally, all pharmacists expressed satisfaction with their learning experiences. The nicotine dependence of the participants who received counselling was significantly lower after 2 sessions compared to those who did not. ($\bar{x}$=2.55 vs. $\bar{x}$=5.06; t=-6.04; *p<0.0001*). Pharmacists should have the knowledge and skills needed to assist and motivate smokers in their quit attempts. Also, the pharmacist-delivered smoking cessation counseling program proved to be an effective intervention for increasing smoking cessation rates.

Keywords: *smoking cessation, filipino pharmacist, counseling program, nicotine dependence*