

## **Transition of an Acute Psychiatric Facility to a Non-Smoking Environment**

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**Problem:** Psychiatric nurses have been reluctant to implement smoking cessation on inpatient psychiatric units despite high use of tobacco by psychiatric patients. This is due to fears of increased physical aggression, increased episodes of seclusion/restraints and disruption of the treatment milieu. Additionally, there was concern for potential withdrawal symptoms and discharges against medical advice.

**Evidence:** Psychiatric patients are twice as likely to smoke as the general population and those patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia are almost three times as likely to smoke.<sup>1</sup>

**Strategy:** A multidisciplinary team was organized to explore the effects of smoking on patients and opportunities to provide education and encourage smoking cessation. A survey of staff and patients was conducted to gain input regarding smoking preferences and concerns related to becoming a non-smoking facility. The goal is to provide a healthy environment for patients and staff and to promote smoking cessation that continues beyond hospitalization.

**Practice Change:** A comprehensive education program was implemented to prepare staff, patients and visitors. Program schedules were modified to replace smoking breaks with therapeutic activities. The facility changed to a non-smoking environment in November 2004. Education, communication and pharmacological strategies were implemented to prepare and assist staff, patients and visitors during and after implementation.

**Evaluation:** Data was collected regarding the rates of seclusion/restraint, staff and patient injuries, AMA discharges and episodes of aggression.

**Results:** A three year evaluation of outcomes has proven the practice change successful. Statistical information gathered demonstrates that there has not been an increase in patient aggression, seclusion, restraint or disruption of the treatment milieu since implementation of a smoke free environment.

**Recommendations:** Maintaining a smoke free environment on an acute psychiatric unit is possible and successful. Implementation in the psychiatric environment has prompted the acute hospital to follow in a smoke free environment.

### Bibliography:

<sup>1</sup> Ashwin, A.P., Gopalakrishnan, R., Lundy, A., Leone, F.T., Certa, K.M., & Weinstein, S.P. (2002). Relationship between tobacco smoking and positive and negative symptoms in schizophrenia. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. 190:604-610.