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STAFF AND PATIENT ATTITUDES AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE SMOKING BAN IN A PSYCHIATRIC FACILITY

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Aims: The purpose of the study was to evaluate issues related to the implementation of a smoking ban with the aim of improving programs to help patients reduce or quit smoking.

Method: At a 410 bed psychiatric facility, 73 staff and 68 patients completed separate surveys regarding their attitudes towards a smoke-free policy banning all indoor smoking and smoking on the grounds.

Results: 55.2% of patient respondents smoked cigarettes and 42% of participants who smoked have either reduced tobacco consumption or have quit. Changes in quality of life that were found to be significant were mood, eating habits, outlook on life, and level of restlessness, anxiety, stress, and concentration. Comfort level and alertness did not change significantly. These symptoms are all associated with nicotine withdrawal. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) was perceived as being effective in relieving nicotine withdrawal symptoms. Over half of the patients have not discussed tobacco use with a health care professional. Staff expressed mixed attitudes towards the ban and the use of NRTs. Concerns were raised over patients smoking while using NRT in fear of the patient receiving too much nicotine.

Conclusion: Given that the deleterious health consequences of smoking are well known and given the high prevalence of smoking in the psychiatric population, extraordinary efforts are required to significantly reduce tobacco consumption. The implication of this research is that education on tobacco reduction options ought to be provided to staff as well as patients. Efforts to reduce tobacco usage must be incorporated into standard patient care.