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ABSTRACT

Smoking Cessation Counseling in Palestine: Community Pharmacists' Attitudes, Role Perceptions and Practices

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Smoking is a major risk factor for many diseases that causes death. Meaning, smoking cessation is a key to reducing the number of smoking-related diseases and deaths at any age. Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to promote tobacco cessation; they are the most easily accessed by the public and are exceptionally situated to initiate behavior change among smokers. The objective is to assess Palestinian pharmacists' awareness and attitudes regarding smoking cessation and determine the barriers preventing pharmacists performing their role in smoking cessation. Simple, self-administered surveys were distributed to practicing community pharmacists in Palestine (West Bank). The survey consisted of 5 sections: demographic, pharmacist's knowledge, pharmacist's attitude, smoking cessation treatment, and the pharmacist's role in smoking cessation. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS®) Version 23. Preliminary results involving 90 pharmacists working in community pharmacies showed that pharmacists had a good knowledge regarding smoking and their role in smoking cessation (34%). A 20% of the pharmacists reported that they 'always' or 'most of the time' asked their patients about their smoking status. Once patients' smoking status was identified, a 40% of the pharmacists provide advices regarding smoking cessation and only 25% assess smokers' readiness to quit. Almost 33% of the recruited pharmacists 'always' and 'most of the time' assisted smokers in quitting by advising the use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). Only 39%, 10%, and 9% of the pharmacies expressed the availability of smoking cessation treatments such as NRT, bupropion, and champix, respectively. Only 38% of the pharmacist 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' that the smokers appreciate their advice about quitting.