

RNAO Advanced Clinical Practice Fellowship (ACPF): Understanding the Persistence of Tobacco Use in Patients with a Diagnosis of Cancer and Receiving Oncology Services

Background: Persistent tobacco use results in adverse effects during treatment, increased risk of recurrence and reduced survival. In Q1 to Q4 2021/2022, 172 patients declined a smoking cessation intervention at the KHSC SE Regional Cancer Centre. The project aimed to 1) understand why some oncology patients continue to use tobacco and what biopsychosocial factors influence their decision-making and 2) to improve the smoking cessation program's access, engagement, and acceptability by gaining a deeper understanding of oncology patients' views.

Methods: This project aligns with the Model for Improvement outlined by Health Quality Ontario (HQO, 2023) and is specifically located at the 'understanding your system' phase in planning to improve the existing smoking cessation referral process. As a result, a literature review, telephone interview questionnaire, consent, REB approval, and qualitative data collection processes were designed to complete the project.

Results: 12 patients consented to participate. One-quarter (25%) of participants (n=3) expect the smoking cessation program to provide information on smoking/cigarette/ tobacco to take home. A quarter (25%) of participants (n=3) expect the smoking cessation program to respect and uphold individual choices in engaging with smoking cessation programs. Two-thirds (67%) of participants (n=8) remember coming to the Cancer Centre for the first time but did not recall the events of the day, including being screened for tobacco use.

Conclusions: This project is a critical Quality Improvement opportunity to change and offer smoking intervention at a different time to avoid cognitive overload on the first clinic visit. This project also highlights that the best evidence-based interventions at the wrong time can sometimes have a poor uptake.