

Supplementary
Submission

No 3a

INQUIRY INTO TOBACCO SMOKING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation:

Name: Mr Michael Stevens

Position: Pharmacist, AOD Consultant

Telephone:

Date Received:

Theme:

Summary

Submission to the Public Forum of the Joint Select Committee on Tobacco Smoking.

As a locum pharmacist I work in community pharmacies on an infrequent basis so I am not able to provide any quantitative data on smoking prevalence or data of outcomes from intervention.

Many customers ask to buy a Ventolin inhaler, a common product used to relieve the symptoms of asthma. As I have to determine if the use of Ventolin is appropriate for these people I ask them several questions, including "do you smoke?" I am aware that about half the requests are from people who smoke.

I ask them how they feel about the need to use a medication and then smoking and most of them indicate that they are aware of the dangers of smoking and that they should quit. It is worrying that some people do not associate smoking as a cause or contributing agent to their "asthma" or other breathing condition. Most people are aware of the Quitline through advertising. *THEY NEED HELP TO TAKE ACTION.*

Because of recent changes to regulations pharmacists have to record customer details for many of the cold and flu products on the market. This gives me the opportunity to ask the question "do you smoke?" and early indications are that about 10% of requests come from smokers. One would expect that about 20% of requests would come from smokers reflecting the percentage of smokers in the community.

Pharmacists come in contact with smokers frequently and are respected as a source of health information. They are in a unique position to identify smokers and provide a short intervention to encourage smokers to quit. Some strategies that would enable pharmacies to achieve a high rate of referrals to quit smoking are:

- Encouraging a partnership between GP's and pharmacists to identify smokers.
- Training GP's, pharmacists and pharmacy staff to ask about smoking whenever medication is requested.
- Training pharmacists to ask about smoking when undertaking a medication review.
- Training pharmacists in counselling methods that will maximise the chance of the smoker undertaking to quit smoking.
- Explore avenues of funding that could provide sample "starter packs" of Nicotine Replacement Therapy to people who might give it a trial.
- Provide government endorsement and funding to maximise the potential success of these strategies.

Michael Stevens
Pharmacist AOD Consultant
Waverton NSW
mjstevens@optusnet.com.au

1st. May 2006