

Review Article

Smoking Cessation Support Services at Community Pharmacies in the UK: A Systematic Review

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Tobacco smoking is the number one preventable cause of death worldwide. Death rates documented in the UK have shown that more than 120,000 patients per year have died because of smoking.^{1,2} Financially, the budget required in order to treat the diseases and the medical conditions developed as a result of tobacco smoking is calculated to cost the National Health System up to £1.7 billion per year.^{1,2} As smoking is a modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, early and total cessation could prevent morbidity and mortality. Smoking activates platelets and increases their adhesion, it causes malfunction or damage to the vascular endothelium, and it also increases the fluidity and levels of fibrinogen.³ Smoking also causes atherosclerosis, leading to myocardial infarction, angina, sudden death, stroke, and intermittent claudication.^{4,5} A number of studies have shown that legislation to ban smoking in of public places has led to a reduction in the incidence of myocardial infarction, especially among young people and non-smokers.³

Tobacco smokers face difficulties when they decide to discontinue, as the dependency on nicotine makes quitting hard without help and support. Smoking cessation services are services that encourage smokers to use a combination of

pharmacological aids and psychological support in order to stop this habit more effectively. Educating smokers about the importance of not smoking is the first step in their long-term effort to give up the habit. This is why health care professionals, and more specifically pharmacists, should offer psychological support, help patients in their decision to quit smoking, inform them, and make sure that they understand the harmful effects of smoking, as well as the benefits of giving up. Once a patient has taken the important decision to quit smoking, there are three methods to help the implementation of that decision: nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), non-nicotine pharmacotherapy (Bupropion, Varenicline), and electronic cigarettes.³⁻⁸ Smoking cessation services were found to be cost-effective,⁸ but they necessitate approaches that could educate a large percentage of the general population. Community pharmacists and pharmacy personnel, who include pharmacy assistants, pharmacy technicians and trainees, could be the number one accessible option for patients who want to stop smoking.^{3,6-7,9} In addition, published data have reported that pharmacists and pharmacy staff could play an active role in smoking cessation services, for example by providing education and counseling on the available NRT products (e.g.

patches), as well as suggesting lifestyle and behavioural changes.

The principal purpose of this literature review is to evaluate the existing accessible published data regarding the training, interventions, outcomes, and cost-effectiveness of pharmacy-led smoking cessation services within the UK. We performed a review and examination of the information contained in each study concerning ways in which pharmacy-led smoking cessation services can be enhanced in the future.

Materials and Methods

This literature review was conducted according to the regulations and recommendations of the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination's guidance for undertaking Systematic Reviews.¹⁰

Search approach

The study search was conducted between 9th October and 9th December, 2014, using the following electronic search engines: Science Direct, Google Scholar, Web of Knowledge, PubMed, NCBI, Scopus, and The Cochrane Library. These particular search engines were selected for the purpose of this review because of their comprehensive amount of available data related to the topic of preventative medicine and clinical pharmacy, as well as health sciences. The keywords used for the purpose of this review were as follows: preventative medicine, clinical pharmacy, smoking, England, Scotland, UK, smoking cessation, smoking cessation products, community pharmacies interventions, role of the pharmacists in smoking cessation, pharmacy staff and smoking, healthy living pharmacies, outcomes of smoking cessation services, cost-effectiveness, and smoking cessation services.

Study eligibility criteria

The selection criteria were based on the design of the study searched. This literature review included observational studies and randomised controlled trials referring to any smoking cessation service offered by pharmacists or any other member of staff within the community pharmacy setting. Furthermore, the selection criteria were based on studies that recruited smokers, covered the cost-effectiveness of the pharmacy services, and were related to quitting smoking

as well as the interventions and the outcomes (total avoidance and regression).

Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria assigned had geographical and time limits, which meant that the studies evaluated data derived from the UK and were conducted between 1990 and 2014. In addition, the studies chosen in this paper were specifically related to smoking cessation services offered within community pharmacies. The use of the English language was also a set criterion.

Case studies chosen and data extraction approach

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, and one assessor (AP) screened all suitable studies for the appropriate documentation. Key points of information were obtained from the studies. These included the study authors, year of publication, background of the study, the methodology proposed, the country of origin, the features of the participants and the main outcome.

Results

Literature search and study choice

Three hundred and two citations were acknowledged, of which 25 were duplicated and 92 were not appropriate. The flow chart in Figure 1 demonstrates the article assessment and the choice procedure. Articles were assessed through their abstracts, and 185 were excluded, leaving 37 full-text articles to be screened for appropriateness. Finally, six full-text articles met the criteria set.

Features of the selected studies

After the selection procedure, six studies were incorporated in this review, covering 6528 participants. This review evaluated two observational studies and four randomised controlled trials, all conducted in the UK. Additional information on the study features and strategy, number and characteristics of the participants, as well as the monitoring period, are shown in Table 1. Of the six studies comprising the review, two investigated the interventions and outcomes of smoking cessation services in the community pharmacy setting, one showed the cost-effectiveness outcomes of a pharmacy-led group smoking

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