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FOR THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH

Mailman School Reaches Out To Turn Smokers Into Quitters

The resources to stop smoking are out there, but smokers aren't using them because they don't know they exist. That's why the Manhattan Tobacco Cessation Network has hit the ground running during its first year of a five-year grant from the New York State Department of Health. Based at the Mailman School of Public Health's Department of Sociomedical Sciences, the network has been working with hospitals and health care providers throughout Manhattan to find the most effective ways to identify smokers and get them to quit.

"Despite the fact that there are six smoking cessation medications covered by Medicaid, a toll-free phone hotline smokers can call for help quitting, and free counseling programs, these resources are underutilized," says Donna Shelley, M.D., M.P.H., principal investigator and assistant professor of clinical sociomedical sciences. "About 70 percent of smokers see a doctor each year. Providers can therefore be the link between these patients and smoking cessation services. Our program is meant to bridge practices to these services so that every smoker is given their best chance to quit."

Under Dr. Shelley's leadership, the program has created a new chart system to prompt physicians to ask patients if they smoke and to discuss quitting options. The network also has printed a prescription pad with the toll-free phone number of the state's Quitline, which smokers can call to receive free counseling and/or free nicotine replacement therapy; a card for doctors with information about how to prescribe various cessation medications; and posters for hospitals and health care providers about Medicaid's coverage of those medications. In addition, the network is implementing the state's fax referral service. This service allows doctors to send the phone numbers of patients interested in quitting smoking to Quitline counselors, who will then call patients directly to get them started on the path to cessation.

"This isn't a hard sell," Dr. Shelley says. "Once you show providers the resources and tools, there's a lot of enthusiasm to use them."

—Adar Novak

Help Patients STOP SMOKING

ASK

about tobacco use at every visit.

ADVISE

patients to stop smoking.
"It's the most important thing you can do for your health."

ASSESS

readiness to quit.

REFER

patients to the New York State
Smokers' Quitline 1-866-NY-QUITS
(1-866-697-8487).

PRESCRIBE

medication. It's free with
an Rx for Medicaid patients.

You Can Quit.
We Can Help.

NEW YORK STATE
SMOKERS' QUITLINE
1-866-NY-QUITS
1-866-697-8487
www.nyquitline.org

A poster provided to doctors