

Paper Session C4: New Initiatives in Health Promotion

Understanding the Experiences of Pregnant Smokers and Their Providers: Policy Implication

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Purpose: Healthy People 2020 targets tobacco use as a continuing major health concern in the United States with special attention to the deleterious effects of smoking during pregnancy.

Background: Our study of 194 rural pregnant smokers enrolled in the Smoke Free Baby & Me Program that was integrated into routine perinatal care found significant differences in validated smoking cessation at the postpartum visit in the group of women who had quit just prior to their first prenatal visit, but no differences among those who were still smoking at that visit. In addition, the study found a profound discordance between self-reported smoker status and urinary cotinine levels.

Purpose: Therefore, this follow-up study was conducted to increase our understanding of the experience of the pregnant smoker and of their health care providers.

Design and Methods: A qualitative descriptive study utilized focus group methodology. Four semi-structured questions guided the group discussions which were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Nine groups were held in two counties and in three distinct communities; six consisted of providers and three of pregnant women. Transcripts were read and coded independently; themes were identified using constant comparative analysis and were validated by consensus process.

Results: There was a total of 66 participants. Provider groups (N = 45) were predominantly White (93.3%), Female (93.3%), and Registered Nurses (68.9%). The separate focus groups for pregnant women (N = 21) were attended by a sample that was 100% White; average age, 24.4 years. All the women smoked at the beginning of pregnancy; 19% (4) were recent quitters. Four common themes transcended the provider and pregnant women groups: barriers to quitting, mixed messages, attitudes/approach, and program modalities. They corroborate previous findings that cigarette smoking is used for stress relief especially when the pregnancy itself is a stressor. Pregnant women often feel guilty about smoking but do not want to be “nagged” or “preached to”. Health care providers need to be cognizant of their approach when addressing the subject. Specific educational suggestions include putting a label and “face to the problem” of tobacco use during pregnancy.

Conclusions: These results have implications in how smoking cessation programs for pregnant women are redesigned. More research is needed on how best to implement the USDHHS Clinical Practice Guidelines (Fiore, et al., 2008) in specific populations.