



National Prescribing Service Limited

MEDIA RELEASE

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New program to identify at-risk smokers and help them quit

Approximately two-thirds of Australia's 4 million smokers are currently considering quitting smoking, but some people need a little extra support to maintain a cessation program and quit for good.

The latest education program from the National Prescribing Service (NPS) assists doctors and pharmacists to identify patients who may be ready to quit smoking – especially those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) – and develop effective, tailored smoking cessation programs for them.

"Smoking is the largest single preventable cause of death and disease in Australia," NPS senior clinical adviser, Judith Mackson said.

"While many people have tried to give up at some point, attempts to quit are more likely to succeed if coupled with the right information, products and support."

"Even if patients haven't indicated they want to quit smoking, health professionals have a responsibility to discuss smoking cessation as you are in a position to prompt people to begin a serious cessation program."

According to research from the NSW Cancer Institute, the number of smokers seeking advice about quitting from GPs and pharmacists has doubled since 2007.

"Health concerns are often the reason why people decide to quit smoking. This is particularly compelling for people with COPD, yet approximately one in six COPD patients continues to smoke," Ms Mackson said.

The NPS therapeutic program *Smoking cessation and managing stable chronic obstructive pulmonary disease* encourages health professionals to:

- Discuss smoking cessation with all patients who smoke, particularly those with COPD
- Determine intention to quit and level of nicotine dependence to tailor smoking cessation strategies
- Discuss the patient's preference for nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), varenicline or bupropion if a pharmacotherapy is most suitable
- Use spirometry to confirm COPD diagnosis and assess severity
- Start therapy with an inhaled short-acting bronchodilator and regularly review inhaler technique
- Refer early for pulmonary rehabilitation to improve symptoms and quality of life.

As part of the therapeutic program the following resources and activities have been developed for doctors, pharmacists and nurses:

- NPS News (68): *Helping smokers quit*
- Prescribing Practice Review (50): *Smoking cessation and managing stable chronic obstructive pulmonary disease* (available 30 April)
- Case study (63): *Managing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease*

For further information visit www.nps.org.au/health_professionals

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