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Implementation of a Standardized Process to Increase Referrals to the Tobacco Quitline Among Cancer Survivors in an Outpatient Clinic

PURPOSE

The purpose of this scholarly project was to implement a standardized process to increase referral rates to the tobacco quitline among cancer survivors in an outpatient center. The intent was to promote the usage of tobacco cessation resources for this vulnerable population.

BACKGROUND

“Cigarette smoking remains the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death in the United States” (CDC, 2023). This project was implemented in an ambulatory clinic among the Harris County population, Houston, Texas. The aim of this project was to increase the number of quitline referrals by 20% in six months.

METHODOLOGY

Interventions were implemented to include: (a) changes in clinical workflows among medical staff, (b) electronic referrals to the quitline, (c) meetings with staff, and (d) one-month follow-up on patients referred. A Qualtrics® survey was used to assess providers’ confidence levels in addressing tobacco cessation. The Plan-Do-Study-Act method helped evaluate the effectiveness of intervention.

RESULTS

The number of referrals placed by nurse practitioners during the six-month period increased by 37%, exceeding the goal of 20%. The results of the post-survey taken by the nurse practitioners indicated an increase in confidence levels in addressing smoking cessation with the updated clinic workflow.

IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of a standardized process can help to identify smokers and increase chances of referring patients to the tobacco quitline, and patients may be more willing to quit smoking and improve overall patient health. Future quality improvement should focus on providing additional tobacco cessation resources and evaluating the effectiveness of the quitline.