



BETTER HEALTH IN THE BIG APPLE: A COMPREHENSIVE, TEAM-BASED APPROACH TO TOBACCO CESSATION

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For smokers, quitting the tobacco habit is perhaps the most important step they can make to improve their health. Quitting can significantly lower their risks for heart disease, stroke, vascular disease and numerous other dangerous conditions.¹ But quitting can be challenging, despite the best intentions. The NYU Langone Medical Center recognizes this. The center's cardiopulmonary rehabilitation and wellness programs have created a tobacco cessation team that incorporates medical care, behavioral counseling and electronic health records to optimize a patient's chance for kicking the smoking habit for good.



Every single tobacco cessation plan is individualized. That is key because the triggers for Patient A to smoke are very different for the triggers of Patient B. The less cookie-cutter the plan is, the greater the success.”

— Jonathon Whiteson, M.D.

[Fast Facts]

- Cigarette smoking is the second leading risk factor for death in the nation. It was responsible for more than 480,000 premature deaths in the United States annually from 2005 to 2009 among those 35 years and older.²
- The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that the primary causes of premature death among smokers are tobacco-related diseases, including cancer and respiratory and cardiovascular disease.³
- The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reported that 14.3 percent of residents of New York City, or more than 950,000 adults, smoke.⁴



¹ https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sg/2010/consumer_booklet/pdfs/consumer.pdf

² <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/circulationaha/early/2017/01/25/CIR.000000000000485.full.pdf>

³ <https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/full-report.pdf>

⁴ New York Smoke-Free <http://nycsmokefree.org/smoking-statistics#1>

[What We Did]

- In the early 2000s, Rusk Rehabilitation, part of the NYU Langone Medical Center, began providing comprehensive tobacco cessation services that included medication therapy and behavioral counseling to its cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation. The program expanded and was offered to center employees in 2007.
- In 2013, as part of its participation in the New York City health department's "Tobacco Free Hospital Campaign," the center established an inter-departmental team that helped standardize tobacco-related policies and expand specialty services. The resulting program utilized electronic health records to help clinicians screen patients on their needs and lifestyle habits before prescribing medication and offering counseling. Patients also were educated on nutrition, stress reduction, and behavioral factors to help them identify the emotional and environmental triggers leading to tobacco use.

[What We Accomplished]

- The tobacco cessation program has identified more than 9,300 tobacco-using patients since its 2013 expansion. It has worked with more than 80 percent of them using cessation techniques or medication.
- [A March 2017 report](#) on a preventative initiative between the center's smoking cessation program and the hospital's orthopedic department found encouraging news for smokers who quit: Patients about to undergo hip or knee replacement surgery had better outcomes if they enrolled in a six-week tobacco cessation program before their procedure. These patients also had fewer complications afterward, including infections, blood clots and hospital readmissions.
- The study illustrates the program's increased benefits when aligned with preventative care, said Ana Mola, NYU Langone's director of care transitions and population health management:

"As we glean more experience in terms of how to outreach tobacco cessation services within our infrastructure, as well as our patient's community, these kinds of initiatives give us a big burst of insight in terms of prevention," she said. "Along with meaningful use of electronic medical records and really asking patients about their lifestyle behaviors, such as smoking, exercise and weight, we can help our patients be healthier – because a healthy patient going into surgery is also a healthy patient recovering after surgery."

[What We Learned]

Patients eager to quit smoking don't often understand that the process takes time and involves numerous changes beyond eliminating cigarettes and adopting nicotine patches. They need to first understand the lifestyle and behavioral causes behind their dangerous habit.

"Smokers need to be prepared and educated about why they smoke and identify what triggers their need to reach for a cigarette," said Jonathan Whiteson, Rusk's director of the cardiac and pulmonary wellness program.

"Simple things like getting rid of ashtrays or cleaning clothes, or planning a different route to work, or buying a bottle of water instead of coffee – these are the things that make a difference when you add them up," he said. "People who have been smoking for many years, they don't have to quit immediately. We need to make sure they're ready to quit first."

[What We Are Doing Now]

- Members of the Tobacco Cessation Team participate monthly regularly on Doctor Radio, a community outreach program broadcast on Sirius XM Channel 110 in conjunction with NYU's Langone Medical Center. The program allows team members to reach beyond their local community and mix with health practitioners, patients and the general public across the country to answer questions about smoking cessation, as well as provide advice and support.

NYU Langone Medical Center
550 First Avenue
New York, NY 10016

646-929-7870
NYU QuitLine: 1-855-NYU-QUIT
(1-855-698-7848)