

Introducing 'opt-out' referrals for pregnant women to stop smoking services: impact on smoking cessation.

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BACKGROUND

- Smoking in pregnancy is a major health issue that is a priority for many health systems worldwide.
- Stop Smoking Services (SSS) provide support that is recognised as helpful in pregnant smokers' quit attempts, but only a minority of women access these in pregnancy.



- UK government guidelines recommend systematic CO identification of pregnant smokers followed by 'opt-out' referrals to SSS (i.e. to refer all smokers, unless they specifically decline), but little is known about the effectiveness of this approach.

AIMS

To compare rates of referral for and engagement with SSS support, and of smoking cessation both before and after implementation of 'opt-out' referrals.

METHODS

'Opt-out' referrals were introduced during 12-week antenatal scan appointments in one UK hospital Trust, in addition to the standard 'opt-in' referrals at 9-weeks appointments (i.e. only to refer those, who specifically ask for it). Routine referral data at both appointments and referral outcomes (setting quit dates/self-reported abstinence) were collected during 6-months study period and a time-matched control period the previous year.



RESULTS

Table 1. Smoking at 9- and 12-week appointments, before and after implementation of 'opt-out' referrals

	Before		After	
	May – Oct 2012		May – Oct 2013	
	N	%	N	%
Women attending 9-week appointment	2287		2293	
Self-reported smoker at 9-weeks	536	23.4	524	22.9
Women attending 12-week scan			2011	87.7
Offered CO test			1610	70.2
Took CO test		N/A	1497	65.3
CO ₂ ≥4ppm (smoker)			506	22.1
CO ₂ ≥4ppm but did not report being a smoker at 'booking'			156	6.8
Total number of smokers identified in period	536	23.4	680	29.7

Table 2. Cessation outcomes before and after implementation of 'opt-out' referrals

	Before			After			Difference (95% CI) (p value)
	May – Oct 2012			May – Oct 2013			
	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI	
Referrals received by SSS	290	12.7	11.4 to 14.1	421	18.4	16.8 to 20.0	5.7 (3.6 to 7.8)*
Women who set a quit date	57	2.5	1.9 to 3.2	121	5.3	4.4 to 6.3	2.8 (1.7 to 3.9)*
Women who reported one month abstinence	46	2.0	1.5 to 2.7	93	4.1	3.3 to 4.9	2.1 (1.1 to 3.1)*

*p<0.0001

- As the result of 'opt-out' referral pathway, an additional 156 smokers were identified.
- We observed a significant increase in the number of referrals received by SSS in the period after implementation.
- Twice as many women engaged with SSS (set a quit date) in the period after implementation, compared to period before (p<0.0001)
- Twice as many women reported being abstinent one month after their quit date in the period after implementation (p<0.0001).

CONCLUSIONS

Introducing systematic identification of smokers using CO monitoring and 'opt out' referrals led to a substantial increase in number of referrals received by SSS; doubling of the number of women engaging with SSS; doubling of the number of women reporting one month of abstinence from smoking.

'Opt out' referrals with CO validation have the potential to improve quit rates during pregnancy and thus should be used to engage and provide smoking cessation support for pregnant smokers.