

VA



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News Advisory

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VA Study: Smoking Cessation Assistance Helps Even Those Smokers Who Say They Are Not Yet Ready to Quit

A new study by Minneapolis VA Health Care System researchers suggests that smoking cessation assistance should be proactively offered to all smokers, even those who are not currently planning to quit.

Traditionally, doctors offer smokers quitting assistance (with counseling and/or medications) only after smokers say they are ready to quit.

But Elisheva Danan, MD, MPH, of the Division of General Internal Medicine at the Minneapolis VA, and an Instructor at the University of Minnesota Medical School, and colleagues analyzed the results of a large randomized controlled trial of VA smokers to see if calling all smokers and offering assistance to quit could increase successful quitting even among those without immediate plans to quit.

Study results were published online April 12, 2016 ahead of print in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

For this analysis, smokers were divided into three categories depending on their stated readiness to quit:

- Preparation: smokers planning to quit in the next 30 days
- Contemplation: smokers considering quitting in the next 6 months
- Precontemplation: smokers with no plans to quit

The authors found that proactive outreach increased the use of evidence-based smoking cessation therapies such as counseling and medications by smokers in all three categories of readiness to quit. Proactive outreach increased successful abstinence among those in preparation (8% absolute increase), and among those in contemplation (4.5% absolute increase), but not among those in precontemplation (no significant difference).

“Currently, doctors only offer help with quitting to those who say they are ready to quit,” Dr. Danan said. “That approach would have left out 64% of the smokers we studied and 44% of those who ultimately quit. Reaching out to all smokers, regardless of initial plans to quit, will have a more significant impact on the population-level smoking rate.”