California Launches the First State Quitline Registry that Supports Smoking Cessation

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Summary
Thousands of smokers across California now have better access to cessation services thanks to the designation of the California Smokers’ Helpline (Helpline) as a public health specialized registry, the first in the nation. This achievement was initiated by building an electronic referral (E-Referral) System in one of the state’s largest health networks. These efforts will strengthen routine screening for tobacco use, enable providers to refer patients directly to the Helpline, and increase utilization of Helpline services and resources to help smokers quit for good.

Challenge
Despite having one of the lowest percent of smokers in the nation, 3.4 million Californians continue to smoke cigarettes. Most smokers want to quit, and about 60% of smokers try to quit each year, but the rate of quit attempts has not increased much in decades. Most smokers try to quit without any help, which means that they are not using evidence-based treatments, such as cessation counseling and nicotine replacement therapy. These treatments, especially when used together, can double the chance of quitting for good. Incorporating tobacco cessation advice into health care services is a key strategy in helping smokers quit. In California, while 60% of adult cigarette smokers reported visiting a doctor or other health care provider in the past 12 months, only 47% of them were advised to stop smoking. Many providers who don’t counsel their patients to quit say they lack the time, knowledge, or training.

Solution
With support from the CDC, the California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) partnered with the University of California (UC) Davis Health System to build an E-Referral System, which prompts providers to screen their patients for tobacco use and allows them to electronically refer patients directly to the Helpline for cessation treatment. The E-Referral System provided the opportunity for Meaningful Use (MU) of patient data; that is, the use of patient data to improve patient and population health, by reporting to a specialized health registry. CTCP worked closely with state agencies to establish the Helpline as a specialized registry that would support the two-way flow of information between health care providers and the Helpline that could support cessation efforts.

Your Involvement is Key
As a health care provider, you play an important role in helping your patients quit. If you are interested in using E-Referral to connect patients to the Helpline or you would like to report to the tobacco use specialized registry to meet meaningful-use requirements, contact the California Tobacco Control Program or visit the Helpline at www.nobutts.org.
Results

E-Referral is fully operating in all five University of California (UC) Hospitals, which have about 165,000 inpatient admissions and 4.5 million outpatient visits per year, and referrals generated can be used to show MU compliance. The UC Health System is now the largest source of direct health care referrals to the Helpline, accounting for 40% of all referrals from state clinics. All patients are routinely screened for tobacco use and offered proven cessation services. Provider and Helpline data reported to the specialized registry will be used to inform cessation interventions, including sending repeated reminders to quit, offering services in a variety of formats, and better integrating patient care and cessation services. Registry data can also be used to understand trends in tobacco use to improve quit rates at the population level.

“Instead of asking a patient to call, now a provider can tell a patient they will receive a call. Furthermore, the provider will get a results message back from the helpline if the patient did accept counseling and educational materials.”

- Elisa Tong, MD, MA, Physician and Associate Professor

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Sustainable Success

CTCP is expanding Helpline E-Referral services to additional health care systems, while also increasing the Helpline’s capacity to accept E-referrals. As the first state with a tobacco use specialized registry, new opportunities will be explored to leverage the specialized registry data to improve patient care and help inform tobacco control interventions to reduce the burden of tobacco in California. Information about this initiative was shared with partners, including the North American Quitline Consortium (NAQC). NAQC incorporated information about using electronic referral to a statewide quitline as a way to meet MU requirements into a comprehensive technical guide that was disseminated to other state quitlines in the U.S. and their partners.

Success Stories  http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/