PHARMACISTS AGAINST SMOKING
Executive Summary
15/09/00 – 15/09/01

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During the last ten years, non-smoking activities have become an important part of health promotion in community pharmacies. On top of that the broader use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and the availability of NRT products over the counter has emphasized the pharmacists’ task to give their clients information and guidance concerning NRT and tobacco issues in general.

No accurate information was available on how such change in the role has been perceived by the pharmacists. To gain more knowledge, a research project was developed by the EuroPharm Forum Smoking Cessation Task Force and the survey “Pharmacists against smoking” carried out in 12 European countries. The research project is part of a co-operative project between the three fora of health professionals and the Tobacco or Health Programme of WHO Regional Office for Europe aiming at reducing the prevalence of smoking among health service users and health professionals.

The overall aim of the research project was to collect information about the community pharmacists’ attitudes towards tobacco dependence and their actual activities in this field. A second aim was to gain information about the pharmacists’ smoking habits to see whether that had an impact on their attitudes and activities. Such knowledge would provide the possibility to find more effective methods to reduce smoking among European people and to further develop the non-smoking activities in community pharmacies.

The survey showed that the situation for non-smoking work in European community pharmacies is favourable. Community pharmacists are less frequently smokers than people in respective countries and they know the health risks of tobacco use and are aware of the risks of passive smoking. Pharmacists have a positive attitude towards non-smoking work and their knowledge on tobacco dependence in general enables their activities, although more education is required. The results also showed that pharmacists who smoke are usually not so active in their non-smoking activities and their attitudes are more negative.

Nicotine replacement therapy is widely promoted in community pharmacies. As these products are in most cases sold without prescription it is of utmost importance that pharmacists can support clients who want to quit smoking with the help of NRT. The survey showed that the situation seems to be quite good, but more knowledge and written information is needed.

The results can be used in national work where national guidelines on smoking cessation are written or legislative actions should be taken. The project team will continue the work on documenting and informing of pharmacists’ activities, as well as providing models for non-smoking work. The national pharmaceutical associations have an important role in ensuring the implementation of the models and encouraging their members to continue doing non-smoking activities.
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