

Buffalo-area pharmacists say no to tobacco sales in pharmacies

October 30 2012

(Medical Xpress)—More than 75 percent of Western New York pharmacists say tobacco sales in pharmacies should be legally banned, according to research conducted by Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI) and the University at Buffalo (UB), published in BMC Research Notes. The study found that more than 86% of pharmacists surveyed would prefer to work in a pharmacy that does not sell tobacco products.

The research, led by James Marshall, PhD, Senior Vice President for [Cancer Prevention](#) and Population Sciences at RPCI, evaluated the opinions of Western New York pharmacists about the sale of [tobacco products](#) in pharmacies and about their role in helping their patients to stop smoking.

"The sale of [tobacco](#) products in pharmacies in any locality sends conflicting messages to consumers who visit pharmacies for medication or health products," said Dr. Marshall. "Pharmacists, dedicated to protecting the health of their customers, recognize tobacco sales as contrary to their professional ethics. They would, in overwhelming numbers, prefer not to be selling cigarettes. This research will inform policymakers and elected officials as they consider regulations of [tobacco sales](#) in pharmacies."

The 2010 survey evaluated opinions of 148 pharmacy mentors from the UB School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (UBSoPPS) and 345 local supervising pharmacists. Participants were contacted by mail and email. The combined response rate for both surveys was 31%.

The pharmacist's role in assisting patients to stop smoking also was evaluated. The survey found that more than 75% of pharmacists say they "sometimes" or "rarely/never" ask about tobacco use. The majority of pharmacists also indicate that they are not required to document tobacco use among patients or to enter such information into patient records.

"A striking finding is that pharmacy mentors were more likely than supervising pharmacists to be familiar with patients' tobacco use and take steps to offer advice and information about how to quit smoking," said Peter Brody Jr., PharmD, Director of Experiential Education at UBSOPPS. "It was also surprising that area pharmacists seemed not to take full advantage of the opportunity to educate and counsel patients regarding tobacco use. We need to better understand why and do what we can to help correct this issue."

"This research presents several interesting findings, including that the overwhelming majority of pharmacists would support legislation banning the sale of tobacco in pharmacies," added Edward Bednarczyk, PharmD, Chair of the Department of [Pharmacy](#) Practice at UB. "Importantly, this study also shows a considerable gap between theory and practice, with a substantial majority of pharmacists finding the sale of tobacco in pharmacies inappropriate, but doing little to prevent the sale or engage patients regarding [tobacco use](#) and smoking cessation."

More information: The study, Tobacco sales in pharmacies: a survey of attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of pharmacists employed in student experiential and other worksites in Western New York," can be accessed at www.biomedcentral.com/1756-0500/5/413/abstract.

Provided by Roswell Park Cancer Institute

Citation: Buffalo-area pharmacists say no to tobacco sales in pharmacies (2012, October 30)
retrieved 5 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-10-buffalo-area-pharmacists-tobacco-sales-pharmacies.html>

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