

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Tobacco Use and Exposure

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease and death in Wisconsin. More people die of tobacco-related disease than to alcohol, cocaine, heroin, homicide, suicide, motor vehicle accidents and HIV/AIDS combined. Wisconsin hospitals offer a variety of education and smoking cessation classes to help people kick the habit. In addition, all Wisconsin hospitals are tobacco free, campus wide, to signal their support of creating an environment that promotes wellness.

Every time you smoke, your baby smokes

This powerful message, delivered consistently to expectant mothers at the Aurora UW Medical Group Midwifery and Wellness Center in downtown Milwaukee, had a remarkable impact. The Aurora Midwifery and Wellness Center is an Aurora UW Medical Group clinic dedicated to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in birth outcomes in Wisconsin.

“The majority of the women we serve are considered high-risk, and 31 percent reported being active smokers,” reports Jackie Tillett, NM, NC, FACNM, manager of the Center.

“At first we felt that we had little control over the percentage who smoke,” she continued. “But our group, including the midwives, the RNs and MAs, determined that we all needed to characterize smoking as destructive behavior.

“We recognized we were asking the required questions and providing tobacco-cessation materials, but not documenting the impact of the messaging,” Jackie explained.

Working together the team developed a corrective strategy that, in two months, helped to achieve a “percent of patients who smoke” rate of less than 15 percent!

How did they do it?

Jackie explains, “We determined that saying ‘smoking could make your baby smaller at birth’ was not resonating with the women we serve, who often do not make the connection between low birth weight and problems at birth. We began to explain the risks to the unborn baby—that smoking may actually affect the baby’s ability to grow properly. Consistent use of the phrase, ‘Every time you smoke, your baby smokes,’ did resonate and produced much better results.”

“The lessons we learned in our tobacco-cessation initiative were pretty basic,” Jackie summarized. “Involve all your staff, consistently make tobacco use a part of every patient visit, be clear and frank about the risks of smoking and recognize that the number of our patients who smoke is a reflection on the quality of care we provide.”

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

Tobacco cessation program

The dangers of tobacco use are both well-documented and well-known. As the primary health care provider in our communities, and as one of the area’s largest employers, we are clear about our commitment to the health of our community.

No doubt about it: quitting smoking or chewing tobacco is not easy—but it can be done! And quitting is never pointless, no matter how long a person has smoked or chewed.

“Most people need some level of help to quit,” says Wanda Brown, St. Croix Regional Medical Center advanced practice RN, (APRN), and smoking cessation counselor. “We have already helped many people change habits, identify their triggers for using tobacco, deal with denial, confront their rationalizations, and learn effective behavior modification techniques.”

When the new smoking cessation drug, Chantix, became available, staff began including it as another helpful option in the overall program. Studies have shown Chantix to be quite effective in helping people quit smoking, especially when combined with behavior change education/counseling.

Because “one size fits all” quitting programs don’t work for everyone, Brown counsels clients to help them create their own plan to quit using tobacco. She helps individuals choose a method to quit and identify different options/actions to stay

(continued on next page)

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

smoke-free once they've stopped. Components of an individualized plan can include behavior modification techniques, relapse prevention strategies, options for medication prescriptions, Nicorette gum, educational videos—together with a valuable handbook with many ideas to get through “rough spots” after stopping.

Success: A smoker of nearly 40 years quits

After smoking virtually all of her adult life, Jan Hansen, a resident of Centuria, Wisconsin, decided she had to quit.

“I was starting to get a raspy cough and a gravelly voice, and I was becoming exhausted more and more quickly when I exerted myself. It had gotten to be where cigarettes were affecting my whole life. I had to be sure I had some when I went somewhere, and enough in the morning when I woke up. I also noticed that my smoking was increasing. I needed more to satisfy the craving. I was just getting really tired of always worrying about my ‘supply.’ It was all getting very old.”

Hansen had heard about Chantix from Wanda Brown, but, she said, “to be honest, I never thought it would work for me. I was nearly 53, and I'd been smoking since I was 16, and at least a pack a day for 25 years. I really didn't think I could ever quit.”

Hansen talked more with Brown, and then decided to include using Chantix in her quitting plan. “For about three weeks, I had a small urge to smoke, but that didn't last long, and after 30 days, I had NO craving to smoke at all. In fact, I hardly even thought about smoking. I couldn't believe it, actually.” Hansen continued checking in with Brown and following the program. She took Chantix for a total of three months.

That was two years ago. Today, Hansen says she never thinks about smoking anymore. “It's been wonderful. Today, I feel 100 percent better than when I was smoking. Right away, I began sleeping better. I had more energy. The raspy voice and hacking cough are long gone now. My circulation has improved. I can do stuff now that I could never do while I was smoking because I would get too tired.”

About five months after she quit, Hansen went to her dentist for a cleaning. “They couldn't believe the difference,” she said with a laugh. “The dental tech actually thought she had the wrong chart! Smoking affects teeth and gums, too, and mine had healed quite a lot, apparently!”

Hansen had tried to quit in the past, but “the urge to smoke would be so strong I thought I'd have to pull out my hair. It was more than I could handle, so I'd start again. It was certainly well worth it to quit. I'm so happy that I did.”

St. Croix Regional Medical Center, St. Croix Falls



Jan Hansen

Making a date to quit smoking

When Peter Jennings died in April of 2005 of lung cancer, it really brought things close to home for Tim Cunningham. He didn't want that to be him.

Tim wanted to live a healthier lifestyle and to be with his children when they got older. He was ready and needed to take on one of the biggest challenges of his life—becoming smoke-free.

Tim signed up for the Freedom From Smoking® class through work that was facilitated by St. Nicholas Hospital. The tools and information he received in class helped him with his nicotine withdrawal. Tim was grateful to know that he had other co-workers in his class who were going through the same thing and they were able to support one another at work.

Tim took all the information he had learned in class and shared it with his wife, Nancy, who was also a smoker. Two and a half weeks later, she also quit smoking.

Tim and Nancy decided to choose life and they are proud to say that they've been smoke-free since July 2007.

St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.