Are Obstetricians Following Best-Practice Guidelines for Addressing Pregnancy Smoking?
Results from Northeast Tennessee

Background: The rate of pregnancy smoking in Northeast Tennessee is three times the national average, and more than twice the rate for the rest of Tennessee. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists established the well-proven 5 As method of smoking cessation counseling (ask, advise, assess, assist, and arrange) as a standard component of prenatal care in 2000. The purpose of this investigation was to describe the use of the 5 As in prenatal care in Northeast Tennessee, and to evaluate provider attitudes toward and willingness to deal with pregnancy smoking.

Methods: Surveys were distributed to all obstetric practices in a 6 county area in Northeast Tennessee.

Results: All respondents indicated they asked all pregnant patients about smoking, however only two thirds indicated they always gave their pregnant smokers clear, strong, and personalized advice to quit. Fewer than one quarter of providers reported always assessing willingness to quit, providing quit assistance, or arranging for follow-up. While all providers indicated they believe that pregnancy smoking affects the health of the unborn child, only one third indicated this effect was severe, and just over half indicated that addressing smoking during a clinical encounter was of significant value. Reasons for not using the 5 As method on a regular basis included lack of time, not knowing where to send patients for further treatment, and a belief that an intervention would not be effective.

Conclusions: Efforts to address high rates of pregnancy smoking in Northeast Tennessee should include a facilitation of the effective use of smoking cessation interventions in prenatal care.

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