Why We Need to Take Smoking Cessation in Cancer Patients Seriously

Approximately 25-30% of new patients presenting to cancer centres are current smokers. In the past, it was common to ignore smoking status, as it was often thought to be too late to intervene with smoking cessation after a diagnosis of cancer had been made. However, there is a growing body of information, summarized in the January 2014 U.S. Surgeon General’s report, as well as publications of the Institute of Medicine and the American Association of Cancer Research that show that it is almost never too late for cancer patients to stop smoking to derive benefit. The evidence showing the impact of continued smoking on all cause and cancer-specific mortality, treatment-related toxicity, recurrence rates and second malignancies will be reviewed. The Cancer Care Ontario initiative to screen new ambulatory cancer patients for their smoking status and to advise and refer for cessation interventions will be reviewed. Helpful tips to achieve physician engagement in the smoking cessation initiative will be offered.

Learning objectives:

1. Review the health benefits of tobacco cessation following a diagnosis of cancer
2. Provide a description of the tobacco cessation initiative in Ontario’s Regional Cancer Programs
3. Engage health care providers in efforts to get cancer patients to quit smoking
4. Share learning’s on successes and challenges of program implementation