

BRIEF INTERVENTION TRAINING IN SMOKING CESSATION: A WORKSHOP FOR FAMILY DOCTORS

MARIO R SAMMUT

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, MALTA COLLEGE OF FAMILY DOCTORS

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD), in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), the Smoking Target Action Group (STAG) and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), held a one-day workshop for family doctors on Saturday 18th October 2003 entitled "Brief Intervention Training in Smoking Cessation". The workshop was organised by Dr Mario R Sammut, MCFD Secretary for Education, and facilitated by Dr Prannie Rhatigan, Director of the ICGP Smoking Cessation Programme, with Ms Norma Cronin, an anti-tobacco specialist from the Irish Cancer Society (Figure 1). The venue was the Golden Tulip Vivaldi Hotel, St Julian's.

In their "Smoking cessation guidelines for health professionals: an update", West, McNeill & Raw (Thorax 2000; 55:987-999) recommend that "GPs should advise current smokers to stop during routine consultations at least once a year, offer a prescription for NRT (nicotine replacement therapy) or bupropion, offer further support by way of a referral to a specialist clinic or other specialist service, record the response to that advice, and arrange follow up where appropriate". To implement this recommendation, GPs need to undergo training in brief intervention counselling for smoking cessation - this workshop was thus intended to provide participants with such training.

After Dr Rhatigan and Ms Cronin (Figure 2) introduced the Prohaska & DiClemente 'Stages of Change

Model' as applied to smokers, the workshop took an enjoyable interactive form where participants discussed and tried out the 7 As' approach (developed jointly by STAG, ICGP the Irish Cancer Society and the Health Promotion Unit) for helping smokers to quit. (Table 1).

Following a delicious pasta lunch (Figure 3), Ms Elaine Caruana from the Health Promotion Department kindly gave a presentation about the smoking cessation services provided by the Department, namely the quit line (Tel: 21231247), one-to-one counselling, smoking cessation clinics and self-help literature. This was very well received by the participants who made a number of constructive suggestions as to how the services could be improved.

At the end of the workshop, Dr Sammut presented Dr Rhatigan and Ms Cronin with silver pins in the form of the MCFD crest as a memento of the occasion, following which a commemorative group photo was taken with most of the participants (Figure 4).

The family doctors who took part in the workshop were Dr Sonia Abela, Dr Marcon Ali, Dr Louis Bonello, Dr Michael A Borg, Dr Connie Cassar, Dr Doreen Cassar, Dr Saviour Cilia, Dr Michael Cordina, Dr Ethel Farrugia, Dr David Fenech, Dr Peter Fenech, Dr Bryan Flores Martin, Dr Michael Gonzi, Dr Pierre Mallia, Dr Julian Mamo, Dr Adrian Micallef, Dr Mark Rosso, Dr Angela Sammut, Dr Carmen Sammut, Dr Daniel

Table 1

'Stages of Change Model'	'7 As' approach to smoking cessation
All smokers	Ask about smoking status, record in chart, assess stage of smoker
Pre-contemplation	Accept smoker's non-readiness to quit, offer advice, leaflets and support
Contemplation	Assure smoker that quitting is worthwhile, weigh up pros and cons, give advice kit, offer further support
Preparation	Assist in preparing to stop, assess nicotine dependence, encourage setting of quit date, give advice kit and discuss pharmacological aids, support decision to quit
Action	Arrange supportive follow-up, explore concerns, emphasize positive aspects of quitting
Maintenance	Applaud , suggest strategies to prevent relapse, avoid social triggers, encourage new non-smoking activities
Relapse	Acknowledge possible relapse situations, and that most smokers switch between stages before stopping, with the chances of success growing each time

Sammut, Dr Mario R Sammut, Dr David Sciberras, Dr Philip Sciortino, Dr Isabel Stabile, Dr Johan Vella, Dr Mario Vella and Dr Valerio Vella Catalano. The participation of College members was accredited by the Malta College of Family Doctors in its Continuing Professional Development Scheme.

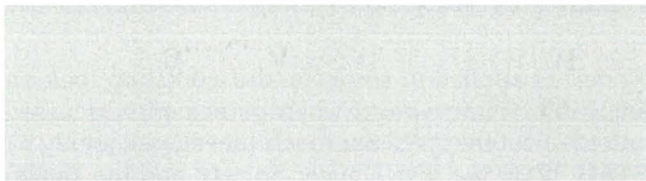


Figure 1: Ms Norma Cronin, Dr Mario R Sammut and Dr Prannie Rhatigan (left to right)

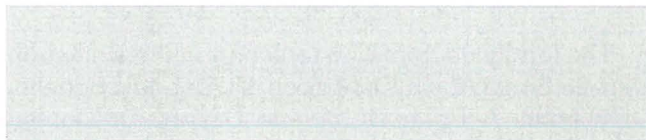


Figure 3: From left, Dr Michael Cordina, Dr Julian Mamo, Dr Peter Fenech, Dr Pierre Mallia, Dr Bryan Flores Martin and Dr Michael A Borg enjoying lunch



Also present as observers were Ms Monica Abdilla, Ms Anna Miggiani and Mr Jeremy Micallef from GSK (Malta), without whose generous sponsorship the workshop would not have taken place.

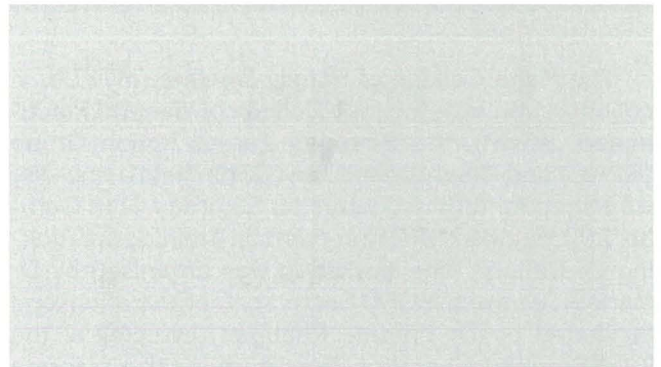


Figure 2: Dr Prannie Rhatigan in full flow (right), with Ms Norma Cronin listening attentively

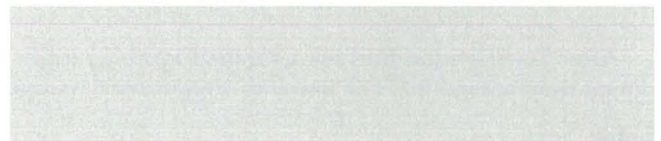


Figure 4: A commemorative group photo of the participants in the Brief Intervention Training Workshop in Smoking Cessation

