

European Respiratory Society Annual Congress 2012

Abstract Number: 3021

Publication Number: P4086

Abstract Group: 6.3. Tobacco, Smoking Control and Health Education

Keyword 1: Health policy **Keyword 2:** Occupation **Keyword 3:** Smoking

Title: A survey to assess smoking awareness and attitudes of staff at a local hospital

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Body: Background: Rising smoking-related morbidity and mortality would be expected to lead to increased awareness among hospital staff regarding the harmful effects of cigarettes. Aims and Objectives: The aim is to assess the smoking habits of individuals working within a hospital setting who are directly or indirectly exposed to patients with smoking-related illnesses. The survey addresses health issues and attitudes towards smoking. The timing is opportune in that Mater Dei Hospital Malta is to be declared a totally smoke-free hospital. Methods: A questionnaire was compiled, based on various tools validated in the literature. These were distributed to all members of staff at our General Hospital, targeting more than 3600 individuals. Results: 27.1% of male and 24.8% of female staff are active smokers. Males were significantly ($p = 0.001$) more likely to have started smoking at a younger age than females. Almost half find difficulty in refraining from smoking in forbidden areas. Only 22.2% of smokers refrain from smoking in hospital. The highest percentage of smokers are in the youngest age group (18-25 years). 10.4% of doctors and 23.6% of nurses are active smokers. 25.7% of non-smokers had previously smoked, the greatest incentive for quitting being for health reasons. Most members of staff are aware of the adverse effects of smoking and a number have symptoms suggestive of smoking-related pathology. Conclusions: Hospital staff mirror the general population with respect to smoking habits and comorbidities. This is unacceptable and emphasizes the need to implement harsher measures whilst educating our hospital staff so that these in turn may serve as educators to patients and hospital visitors.