

Dental Students' Acquired Knowledge of the Pre-Contemplation Stage of Change

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Abstract : Introduction: As patients can often be ambivalent about or resistant to any change in their smoking behavior the traditional '5 A' model may be limited as it assumes that patients are ready and motivated to change. However, there is a stage model that is helpful to give guidance for dental students: the Transtheoretical Model (TTM). This model allows students to understand the tasks and goals for the pre-contemplation stage. The TTM was introduced in early stages as a core component of a smoking cessation programme that was integrated into a Behavioral Science programme as applied to dentistry. The aim of the present study is to evaluate and illustrate the students' current level of knowledge from the questions the students generated in order to engage patients in the tasks and goals of the pre-contemplation stage. Method: N=47 responses of fifth-year undergraduate dental students. These responses were the data set for this study and related to their knowledge base of appropriate questions for a dentist to ask at the pre-contemplation stage of change. A deductive -descriptive analysis was conducted on the data. The goals and tasks of the pre-contemplation stage of the TTM provided a template for this deductive analysis. Results: 51% of students generated relevant, open, exploratory questions for the pre-contemplation stage, whilst 100% of students generated closed questions. With regard to those questions appropriate for the pre-contemplation stage, 19% were open and exploratory, while 66% were closed questions. A deductive analysis of the open exploratory questions revealed that 53% of the questions addressed increased concern about the current pattern of behavior, 38% of the questions concerned increased awareness of a need for change and only 8% of the questions dealt with the envisioning of the possibility of change. Conclusion: All students formulated relevant questions for the pre-contemplation stage, and half of the students generated the open, exploratory questions that increased patients' awareness of the need to change. More training is required to facilitate a shift in the formulation from closed to open questioning, especially given that, traditionally, smoking cessation was modeled on the '5 As', and that the general training for dentists supports an advisory and directive approach.

Keywords : behaviour change, pre-contemplation stage, trans-theoretical model, undergraduate dentistry students

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