Smoking Cessation Training Program Goes National

This summer, faculty members from schools of pharmacy across the country are convening in San Francisco to attend train-the-trainer programs for a smoking cessation program called “Rx for Change: Clinician-Assisted Tobacco Cessation.” Ninety percent of U.S. pharmacy schools have enlisted in this nationwide effort and will be represented at the trainings.

The University of California San Francisco School of Pharmacy has received a four-year, $784,279 grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to support nationwide dissemination of the smoking cessation training program. For schools of pharmacy that intend to implement the Rx for Change program as part of required or elective coursework, the UCSF grant supports travel expenses for two faculty members to attend one of three train-the-trainer sessions offered this summer.

The program was developed as a collaboration of California schools of pharmacy in response to an identified need for tobacco cessation training to become a standard, required component of pharmacy curricula. Despite the fact that tobacco is the number one known preventable cause of disease and death in the United States, most health professional schools do not provide comprehensive training for tobacco cessation counseling.

The Rx for Change program provides a minimum of six hours (up to a maximum of 12 hours) of training and has been required coursework at California pharmacy schools since the spring of 2000. The training combines didactic lecture with an intensive hands-on workshop with the various pharmaceutical aids for cessation, problem-solving with trigger tapes, and role-playing with case scenarios. The program, which draws heavily from the U.S. Public Health Service Clinical Practice Guideline for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence, teaches students to apply the “Five As” framework (Ask about tobacco use, Advise patients to quit, Assess readiness to quit, Assist with quitting, and Arrange follow-up) in delivering tailored interventions. Designed as a turn-key program for broad-scale dissemination, Rx for Change comes complete with all the necessary teaching materials, including PowerPoint slides with instructor notes, fully developed case scenarios with instructor guidelines, student handouts, a videotape that includes an introductory segment of interviews with smokers and trigger tapes, and a Web site to support program implementation.

Preliminary pre- and post-training evaluations by students in California show that the program significantly increases students’ self-rated confidence and skills for providing cessation counseling. When California students were asked if they thought that students at other U.S. schools of pharmacy would benefit from this training, 99.2% responded “yes.”

The goal? “To ensure that our future pharmacists are equipped with the ability to intervene with all tobacco users—including those who are not yet considering quitting,” says Karen Hudmon, Ph.D., assistant clinical professor at UCSF School of Pharmacy, and principal investigator on the NCI grant. The research team believes that with appropriate training, the pharmacy profession has an unparalleled opportunity to serve as a cornerstone for the nation’s tobacco control efforts. Given that several pharmaceutical aids for cessation are now sold without a prescription, the pharmacist might be the only health care professional that a tobacco user communicates with prior to or during a quit attempt.

Robin Corelli, Pharm.D., associate clinical professor at UCSF School of Pharmacy and co-investigator on the grant, notes that applicability of the Rx for Change program is broad, and it can be adapted for use by medical, dental, nursing, or other allied health schools. Indeed, the program is already required training for students enrolled at the UCSF Schools of Medicine and Dentistry.

A study is underway to estimate the impact of a three-hour Rx for Change tobacco cessation continuing education program on clinician practice behavior and patient quit rates. In May 2003, the program was disseminated to 34 nursing schools through collaboration with Georgetown University. Working closely with The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center through a four-year, $4,033,507 grant also funded by NCI, the UCSF research team is conducting a 16-community, randomized, controlled trial that will assess the impact of integrating family practice physicians with community pharmacists for a team approach to assisting patients with quitting. This project will train more than 500 clinicians and enroll more than 2,500 patients during the course of the study. For more information about Rx for Change, contact Karen Hudmon at khudmon@itsa.ucsf.edu or 415/502-6520.

NACDS Names Student Essay Winners

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation has selected three student award winners of its 2002-2003 Community Pharmacy Essay Contest. This year, students were asked to identify the three most important challenges facing chain community pharmacy and to suggest solutions for advancing community pharmacy practice.

The NACDS Foundation Community Pharmacy Essay Contest student winners were awarded scholarships.

First place winner was Ronald Heitz, The Ohio State University. He received a scholarship award of $1,500. His mentor was Craig Pedersen, Ph.D.

Jamie Sumner-Morgan, of Washington State University, was second place winner, and received a scholarship award of $1,000. Mentor was Catherine Elstad, Ph.D.

Third place winner was Sokpoleak So, of the University of Connecticut, who received a scholarship award of $500. Mentor was Gregory Choi, Ph.D.

Faculty mentors of the winners each received a cash stipend of $500.