Patients' Perceptions of the Effects of Smoking on Eye Health – The Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre Eye Casualty Experience

Onyinye Akpenyi – ST1 Ophthalmology HEWM, Diya Baker FY2 HEWM , Faye Mellington Consultant Ophthalmologist BMEC

BACKGROUND

Smoking is a well-established risk factor for various eye diseases[1]. However, there is limited research into patient's perceptions and understanding of the relationship between passive/active smoking and ocular pathology. Furthermore, vaping is an unexplored, emerging phenomenon with unknown health risks. Historically, smoking cessation is inadequately offered by healthcare professionals[2] despite the fear of blindness being a strong motivator for patients[3].

METHOD

We carried out a hospital-based cross-sectional survey in BMEC eye casualty, exploring patients' smoking/vaping status; awareness of smoking-related eye problems; and receipt of smoking cessation advice.
A 14-item questionnaire was completed voluntarily by patients. Data was collated and analysed using the excel software.

RESULTS

232 patients completed the survey of which 19, 6, 12 and 13% smoked, vaped, were secondary or ex-smokers respectively. Of those eligible, X(? 15%) were asked about smoking status and X (?27%) received smoking cessation advice. Smoking cessation was mostly offered by the GP with various therapeutic strategies. Only 9% agreed that smoking can cause blindness, although 31% of respondents knew that smoking could affect the vision and 43% agreed that tobacco smoke is an ocular irritant. More than half (57%) knew about retinopathy of prematurity and that smoking in pregnancy is associated with prematurity.

DISCUSSION

Our study is the first to document the extent of vaping and smoking in a large eye casualty population and patient awareness of smoking-related eye problems.

Only a small proportion of patients with a positive smoking status were asked about smoking or offered smoking cessation advice.

Most patients are unaware of the full impact of smoking.

Strategies to improve public awareness of smoking and vaping on eye health, and the provision of smoking cessation support are advocated.

References

1. Solberg Y, Rosner M, Belkin M. The association betwen cigarette smoking and ocular diseases. Surv Ophthalmol. 1998;42(6):535-547. doi:10.1016/S0039-6257(98)00002-2

2. Gordon JS, Andrews JA, Lichtenstein E, Severson HH, Akers L, Williams C. Ophthalmologists' and optometrists' attitudes and behaviours regarding tobacco cessation intervention. Tob Control. 2002;11(1):84-85. doi:10.1136/tc.11.1.84-a

3. Handa S, Woo JH, Wagle AM, Htoon HM, Au Eong KG. Awareness of blindness and other smoking-related diseases and its impact on motivation for smoking cessation in eye patients. Eye. 2011;25(9):1170-1176. doi:10.1038/eye.2011.143