

ICN 2013: Nurse action for a tobacco – free world

An exciting working lunch exploring National Nursing Association action to achieve a tobacco free world at the International Council of Nurses Congress. Over 45 invited delegates from the Council of National Representatives resolved to lead action to promote routine smoking cessation interventions by nurses, and to support tobacco control as the focus for a future International Nurses Day.

Speakers at the gathering emphasised the vital role that nurses have in helping patients quit smoking and in advocating for a Tobacco Free World. Tobacco use is the only risk factor common to all four major non-communicable diseases (NCDs), cardiovascular and chronic respiratory disease, cancer and diabetes. Eliminating tobacco use is the most effective entry point for reducing NCDs globally.

The meeting was called by Tobacco Control Nurses International (TCNI) and the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO). Kerri Nuku, NZNO co-president and leader of the indigenous arm (Te Runanga o Aotearoa NZNO), said that her passion to reduce tobacco related harm arises from the terrible harm that tobacco wreaks on indigenous and other peoples, including nurses, world-wide.

Kerri exhorted delegates to be smokefree role models and to embrace the words of Florence Nightingale - to collaborate, be brave and take action! She asked them to advocate for policies to eliminate tobacco use in an acceptable timeframe. She said “Nurses should not settle for excuses for not achieving this goal”.

Emeritus Professor Robert Beaglehole is a world renowned advocate for the global reduction of NCDs and for achieving a tobacco free world. He emphasised the extraordinary power of nurses to advocate for a tobacco-free world by 2040 and to help smokers quit. He explained that this will only be possible if millions of smokers quit. The sheer number of nurses globally (18 million) means that this could be done via their everyday work.

Grace Wong spoke on behalf of tobacco control and smoking cessation nurse experts from TCNI. She dispelled common myths about smoking and nursing (see Box). She said “A nurse could save three smokers from dying every year if he/she gave one brief evidence -based smoking cessation intervention every day. It is our professional responsibility to prevent early deaths.”

All nurses are encouraged to join TCNI to enhance this community of practice. News, views and resources on tobacco control and smoking cessation are available on this website. To access this information you should register on the website here. Once registered, nurses are asked to share the experiences that they have in smoking cessation, the systems and processes that have been successful for them and the reaction of their patients when advised to quit. Write a blog, start a conversation thread, upload resources. Over 250 nurses at the ICN Congress joined TCNI – why don't you join them?

Myths	Truths
Smoking relieves stress	Smoking increases stress (Parrott 2004; West & Hajek, 1997)
Smoking is a choice	Smoking is an addiction (Royal College of Physicians, 2000)
It's not a nurse's job to ask and advise	It's every health professional's job to ask and advise
It will damage the therapeutic relationship	People expect to be asked about smoking (Quinn et al. 2005; Herbert & Sykes, 2011)
Nurses don't have time to address smoking	Brief advice can be given in as little as 30 seconds (Ministry of Health New Zealand, 2007)

NOTES

The lunch meeting was held on Friday May 17th during the Council of National Representatives meeting preceding the 25th Quadrennial COngress at the Melbourne Convention Centre.

Emeritus Professor Robert Beaglehole has devoted 30 years to tobacco control and spent eight years with the WHO working on non-communicable diseases.

Grace Wong of Tobacco Control Nurses International (TCNI) is based in New Zealand where she is director of Smokefree Nurses Aotearoa/New Zealand and a lecturer in Nursing at Auckland University of Technology. Tobacco Control Nurses International is committed to nurse advocacy for an essentially Tobacco Free World by 2040 (prevalence <5%).

Kerri Nuku is the Kaiwhakahaere (leader) of Te Runanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Nurses' Organisation (NZNO), and co-president of New Zealand's national nursing association. Te Runanga is actively involved in research and advocacy to reduce inequitably high smoking rates among indigenous Maori nurses.

