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Health Professionals' Advice on Smoking Cessation in Ontario: 2002-2007

Health professionals can and should play a key role in smoking cessation^{1,2} and evidence shows that many consider it their role to advise smokers to quit.^{3,4} Less is known about smokers' views on the role of health professionals, but Ontario data from 2002 show that relatively few smokers are likely to ask pharmacists or dentists for advice on how to quit smoking.⁵ Campaigns promoting health professionals' cessation advice have been in place in Ontario since 2002. This *Update* assesses Ontario smokers' receipt of advice and their likelihood of seeking smoking cessation advice from health professionals in 2007 compared to 2002.

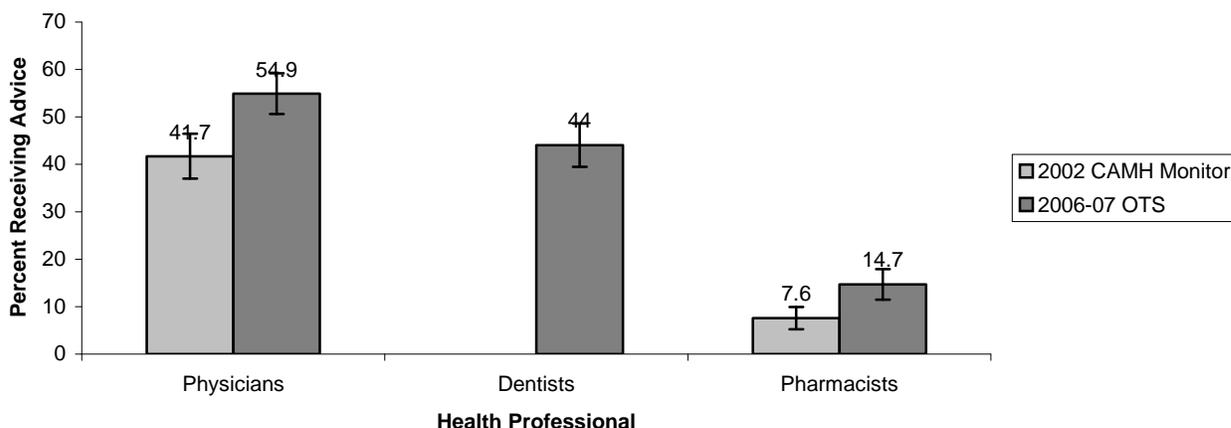
Method

The Ontario Tobacco Survey (OTS) collected 12-month follow-up data for 1,517 adult smokers (who smoked within the last 6 months at baseline) between July 2006 and June 2007 (overall response rate 64%). Respondents were interviewed every 6 months. They were asked if they had been advised to quit smoking by a physician, pharmacist, or dentist, and how likely they would be to seek advice from each of these professionals. Results were compared to 2002 CAMH Monitor data, which asked a random sample of Ontario adult smokers similar questions.

Receipt of Advice from Health Professionals in the Past Year

A higher proportion of Ontario smokers reported receiving advice from their physician or their pharmacist in 2006/2007 than in 2002. No data on advice from dentists were available for 2002.

Fig. 1: Current Smokers' Self-Reported Receipt of Quitting Advice from a Health Professional

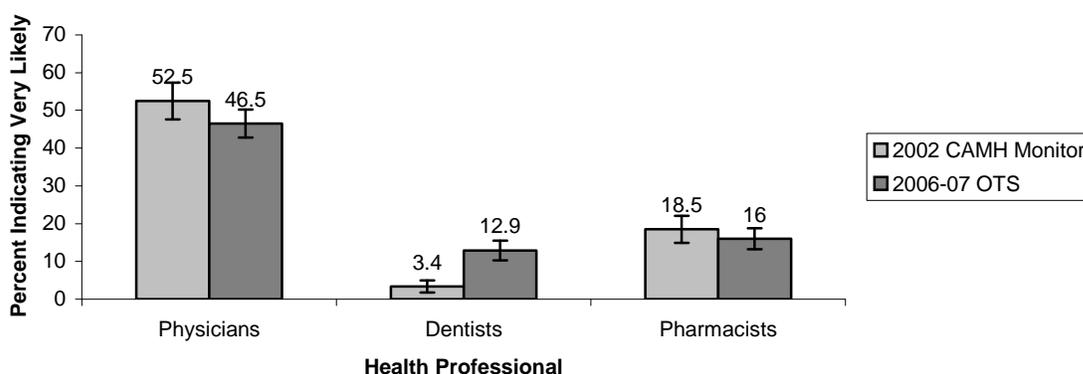


Source: CAMH Monitor 2002; Ontario Tobacco Survey, Waves 2, 3, and 4 2006-2007.

Likelihood of Seeking Advice from a Health Professional

There were few differences from 2002 to 2007 in the likelihood that respondents would seek advice from each of the health professions if they were going to quit. A majority of current smokers indicated they would be *very likely* to seek the help of a physician. Less than 20% indicated they would be *very likely* to seek help from either a pharmacist or a dentist. In 2002 and 2007, more females and older respondents were *very likely* to ask physicians and pharmacists for quitting advice. Also, respondents who had been advised in the past to quit by a particular health professional were significantly more likely to be *very likely* to seek advice from the same health professional in the future as compared to respondents who did not previously receive advice.

Fig. 2: Current Smokers' Likelihood of Seeking Quitting Advice from a Health Professional



Note: M indicates estimate has moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution. Vertical lines represent 95% confidence intervals
Source: CAMH Monitor 2002; Ontario Tobacco Survey, Waves 2, 3, and 4, 2006-2007.

Discussion

Some progress has been made in the use of health professionals' advice to quit smoking. Smokers are more likely to receive and ask for advice from health professionals who have previously given advice, but there is room for improvement. Roughly half of current smokers are not very likely to ask their physician^M for advice to quit, and smokers appear unlikely to ask dentists or pharmacists for advice. Public awareness of the benefits of asking health professionals for advice about quitting should be increased. Additional research is needed to better understand smokers' reluctance to seek the assistance of health care professionals with quitting and what types of additional interventions may be justified.

References

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3. Brewster JM, Ashley MJ, Laurier C, Dioso R, Victor JC, Ferrence R, et al. On the front line of smoking cessation: pharmacists' practices and self-perception. *Canadian Pharmaceutical Journal* 2005;138(3):32-38.
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