



THE ONTARIO
TOBACCO
RESEARCH
UNIT

UNITÉ
DE RECHERCHE
SUR LE TABAC
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Information *Update*

May 2006

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit's New Online Course *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice*

Background

Building on its successful videoconference course for graduate students, the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) has recently developed a new online tobacco control course entitled *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice*. Launched this spring, this free-of-charge course addresses the tobacco control community's need for a comprehensive source of evidence-based information on tobacco control science, policy, and practice. Focussing on the Canadian experience, it provides an in-depth curriculum for public health practitioners who may be new to tobacco control, while serving as a useful resource for those who already have experience in the tobacco control field.

Course Development

Course development was guided by:

- An Advisory Committee, which included members from a number of research, government and teaching institutions
- A needs assessment that was conducted nationally to determine which areas of tobacco control were most pertinent to the target audience
- Subject matter experts who provided key tobacco control material and reviewed drafts of the modules

Once course content was determined, a team of writers, editors, illustrators and media designers collaborated to create the online tobacco control course. Modules were pilot tested and revised, based on the feedback provided.

Overview of Course

The course contains three modules: *Protection*, *Prevention*, and *Cessation*. Using state-of-the-art technology, it offers a variety of graphics, videos, and clips. Interactive quizzes and games help to engage participants and test their knowledge. Upon successful completion of each module's final multiple-choice test, participants will receive a Certificate of Completion to indicate that they have effectively understood course content.

In all, participants will leave this online course with:

- A critical understanding of research and real-world program and policy issues related to tobacco protection, prevention and cessation
- Familiarity with the key current policy debates in tobacco control
- The ability to make better-informed tobacco control and policy decisions in their own work

Next Steps

The *Protection* and *Prevention* modules are widely available. The *Cessation* module is currently being pilot tested and will be accessible by the end of June 2006. The course is also being translated into French—the *La protection* module is complete and the remaining two modules will be ready for offer by the fall. Mechanisms are in place to continually update course content with new evidence, policies and initiatives. A learning management system is being developed to streamline administrative functions such as providing passwords to new users and mailing certificates upon completion of each module, and to collect data for evaluation purposes. The course will soon be formally evaluated to assess whether course objectives are being met, and to identify possible areas for improvement.

The marketing strategy for this on-line resource is designed to ensure that the course is widely used across Canada in public health units, government departments and non-governmental agencies. It is hoped that in the near future the course will be adapted for use in other jurisdictions, particularly less developed countries.

Funding for the development and implementation of *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice* came from Health Canada's Federal Tobacco Control Strategy, with additional support from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion.

For more information about *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice* please view the site at <http://tobaccocourse.otru.org>, or contact Sandra Caswell at tobaccocourse@otru.org or 416-535-8501 extension 4642.