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What's New with OTRU's Online Course *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice*

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit's free online course, *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice*, provides comprehensive, evidence-based information on tobacco control science, policy and practice to the Canadian tobacco control community. Although it is aimed primarily at public health practitioners who may be new to tobacco control, it is also a useful resource for those with experience in this field. Others who would benefit from this course are research assistants, project directors and field staff involved in tobacco control research activities.

Release of New Modules

Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice 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.

In November 2006 the highly anticipated English "Cessation" module and French "Protection" and "Prevention" modules were released on a newly developed learning management system. The French "Cessation" module is currently being pilot tested and will be available in February 2007.

New Features

- Custom-made learning management system which streamlines administrative functions and allows participants to:
 - choose their own passwords
 - track their test scores
 - obtain guidance on incorrect answers
 - print certificates upon successful completion of each module
- "Ask The Expert" button on every page.
- "Blog" providing content updates.

Evaluation

Response to *Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice* has been superb. Over 375 people have applied for enrollment on the new learning management system since it was launched in November 2006. To date, more than 530 modules have been successfully completed. The course is being formally evaluated to assess how well course content is retained and how participants use course material in their day-to-day work. The new learning management system allows the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit team to efficiently collect critical data for evaluation purposes, while an improved application process lets the team identify where participants are located, as well as which types of professionals are enrolling and their degree of experience with tobacco control. This information and the results of the mandatory feedback form enable OTRU to constantly improve the course and keep it relevant to its users.

Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy for the online course includes promotion of its use across Canada in public health units, government departments and non-governmental agencies. The Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion has made the course mandatory for staff in transfer payment agencies, and at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health it is a prerequisite for the *Training Enhancement in Applied Cessation Counselling and Health (TEACH)* program on smoking cessation counselling. OTRU will continue to work toward institutionalizing the course in relevant workplaces across the country. It is also hoped that in the near future the course will be adapted for use in other jurisdictions, particularly in less-developed countries.

For more information about “*Tobacco and Public Health: From Theory to Practice*,” please go to <http://tobaccocourse.otru.org> or contact us at tobaccocourse@otru.org.

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