Award ID:
PP120191

Project Title:
Implementation of an Automated EMR System to Connect Smokers in a
Safety Net Healthcare System with Smoking Cessation Treatment

Award Mechanism:
Evidence-Based Prevention Programs and Services

Principal Investigator:
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Entity:
The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

Lay Summary:

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in the U.S. and has
been linked to cancers of the lung, oropharynx, larynx, esophagus, stomach, pancreas,
bladder, kidney and cervix. Although the health benefits of quitting are substantial, quit
rates are low. Furthermore, smokers with lower socioeconomic status tend to be less
successful at quitting. Therefore, connecting underserved smokers with evidence-based
cessation treatment is crucial for disease prevention and the elimination of tobacco-
related cancer health disparities. Unfortunately, existing evidence-based treatments for
smoking cessation have been grossly underutilized. Thus, the focus of this program is on
enhancing utilization of an existing evidence-based smoking cessation resource among
low-SES and racial/ethnic minority smokers, the Texas Quitline. Specifically, we will
implement an Ask Advise Connect (AAC) approach to deliver evidence-based smoking
cessation treatment to all patients seeking care within the extensive HCHD community
health clinic system. AAC utilizes the electronic medical record (EMR) to systematically
prompt clinicians to assess the smoking status of every patient at every visit, advise
him/her to quit smoking, and directly and electronically link interested smokers with the
Quitline. In a large study being conducted by our team at 10 of the HCHD community
health clinics and over 110,000 patients to date, Quitline treatment uptake is 0.3% of all
smokers in AAR clinics, vs. a Quitline treatment uptake of 12.8% among AAC clinics, a
42-fold increase. To the best of our knowledge, this is the highest population level
cessation treatment uptake reported to date. LVNs will be trained to ask all patients
about their smoking status, advise all patients who smoke to quit, and connect patients
who agree to accept cessation assistance with the Quitline through an automated link in
the EMR. LVNs will receive initial training at the beginning of the program, and booster
training sessions at several time points throughout the program. HCHD health educators
housed within each clinic will serve as champions for the program. The proposed
prevention program builds upon a strong and established partnership between the Harris
County Hospital District (HCHD), The Texas Quitline, Alere Wellbeing, and MD Anderson
Cancer Center, and all partners will play substantial and integral roles in the project. The
overarching goal of the program is to deliver evidence-based smoking cessation
treatment to smokers seeking care within a large, safety net public healthcare system in
Harris County, Texas, and ultimately reduce tobacco-related cancer morbidity and
mortality, particularly among individuals who are disproportionately burdened with the
disease. Furthermore, given recent policy initiatives associated with healthcare reform,

AAC could ultimately be sustained through securing federal funds related to the demonstration of meeting meaningful use criteria for tobacco.