

Connecticut



Offering Smokers a Variety of Options to Help Them Quit

Public Health Problem

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among both men and women in the United States, and smokers have three times the risk for heart disease than nonsmokers. This risk, however, can be substantially reduced when smokers quit. About 25% of residents in Connecticut's Lower Naugatuck Valley smoke, and this raises their risk for heart disease and other tobacco-related conditions.

Program Example

Preventing heart disease is a priority at the Yale–Griffin Prevention Research Center, a partnership between Yale University and Griffin Hospital. The center's researchers developed a specialized approach to helping smokers quit smoking and tested it among a subset of smokers in the Lower Naugatuck Valley. The researchers aimed for a 40% quit rate among study participants rather than the 25% goal of most smoking cessation programs. They reviewed the literature on smoking cessation and identified seven factors that interfere with a smoker's ability to quit smoking: nicotine addiction, depression, anxiety, stress, chemical dependency, weight control, and living with another smoker. Study participants completed questionnaires to rate the importance of each factor. The researchers then used the results to refer participants to one or more appropriate interventions. All participants were assigned to group counseling sessions. Some participants attended weight management or exercise groups, while other participants invited friends and family members to educational dinners where they were encouraged to quit smoking. Other participants were referred for medication or individual counseling.

Implications and Impact

Connecticut's results show that offering multiple approaches is effective in promoting smoking cessation. After 1 year, the results exceeded expectations—42% of the participants had quit smoking. Similar interventions are now being offered to high school students and worksite groups, and eventually they will be offered to all of Lower Naugatuck Valley. Plans are under way to make this Prevention Research Center's questionnaire available to primary care physicians to help them prescribe smoking cessation plans appropriate for their patients.

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