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Acceptability and participation predictors for a pragmatic randomized controlled trial to test a smoking cessation intervention after discharge from mental health wards

Running ahead: Participation in a quit-smoking trial after psychiatric ward discharge

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 50% of smokers with mental health disorders accepted a quit-smoking intervention.
- Smokers that had attempted to quit were more likely to participate in the trial.
- Hospital tobacco control policies mediated participation rates.
- A quitline program may promote cessation benefits introduced during hospitalization.

ABSTRACT

Background and Aim: Hospitalization is an ideal time to promote smoking cessation, but interventions are limited for supporting cessation maintenance after discharge. This study aimed to evaluate the acceptability of participating in a trial that tested the efficacy of an intensive telephone-based intervention for smokers after discharge.

Methods: Adult smokers admitted to mental health wards of six hospitals were invited to participate in the trial. We studied the study acceptance/decline rates by analyzing the characteristics of participants (e.g., sex, age, psychiatric disorder, smoking pattern) and hospitals (e.g., size, tobacco control implementation). We calculated adjusted odds ratios (aOR) to assess predictors of non-participation.

Results: Of 530 smokers that met the study inclusion criteria, 55.5% (n=294) agreed to participate. Participant and non-participants were not different in sex, age, or psychiatric diagnosis. Compared to non-participants, participants had made more attempts to quit in the past year (66.1% vs 33.9%; p<0.001) and reported higher abstinence rates during the hospital stay (66.7% vs. 33.3%; p=0.05). Participation rates by hospital varied from 30.9% to 82.0% (p<0.001). Predictors of non-participation were not having attempted to quit in the last year (aOR=2.42; 95%CI: 1.66–3.53) and low level of tobacco control in the hospital (aOR range: 1.79 to 6.39, p<0.05).

Conclusions: A telephone-based intervention to promote smoking cessation after discharge was accepted by half of the smokers with mental health disorders. Smokers that had attempted to quit previously and those that stayed in hospitals with a strong tobacco control policy were more likely to participate in the trial.

Keywords: smoking, hospitalization, mental health, acceptance, telephone, quitline

1. INTRODUCTION

Tobacco use is responsible for 16% of deaths in the European region (WHO, 2019). In Spain, 24.5% of adults are smokers (PNsD, 2020). The prevalence is two to four fold higher among people with mental health disorders (Ballbè et al., 2015; Guydish et al., 2016). The high prevalence of smoking in this vulnerable group substantially impairs both quality of life and life expectancy (Bandiera et al., 2015). Thus, smoking among individuals with mental health disorders represents an important health inequality that needs evidence-based solutions.

Hospitalization in smoke-free centers provide a unique opportunity to break the cycle of addiction (Hickman III et al., 2015; Metse et al., 2017). However, supportive follow-up interventions are needed to prolong smoking cessation after discharge (Prochaska et al., 2017). Tobacco quitlines are programs that offer individuals evidence-based psychosocial interventions over the phone –and sometimes free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). These interventions previously shown to be effective in the general population (Stead et al., 2013).

Testing innovative interventions in Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) provides evidence on their effectiveness (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). The Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) guidelines (Zwarenstein et al., 2008) suggest reporting information about individuals that decide to decline participation in the trial. Few community interventions for promoting smoking cessation have been tested among mentally ill populations after a hospital discharge (Kagabo et al., 2020). Hence, little is known about the acceptability rates and the reasons for declining participation when offered this type of cessation services.

This study aimed to evaluate the acceptability of participating in a RCT for testing the effectiveness of an intensive telephone-based intervention for smokers after discharge from a mental health ward.

2. METHODS

2.1. Design

This study was part of a pragmatic RCT called 061 Quit-Mental trial. It was designed to assess the effectiveness of a telephone-based intervention for smokers with severe mental health disorders to promote smoking cessation after discharge. The study protocol was described previously (Ballbe et al., 2019).

This multi-center, cross-sectional study included inpatients of mental health wards in six acute-care hospitals located in the province area of Barcelona (hospital feature described in Supplementary _Table 1).

2.2. Study population

All participants had mental health disorders and were inpatients in the psychiatric wards of each participating hospital. Eligible participants were both sexes, age 18–76 years, and smokers, who had stayed in an acute or detoxification mental health units for at least 24 h, had access to a telephone (landline or mobile), and reside in the province area of Barcelona. Participants were excluded when they were discharged from a psychiatric emergency room; had dementia or brain damage; did not speak or read Spanish or Catalan; were pregnant; had a hearing and/or speech deficit; were attempting to quit smoking in another center or with another intervention; had voluntarily requested discharge; were transferred to another inpatient unit after discharge; or had planned to move their household outside the Barcelona metropolitan area within the following 24 months.

2.3. Procedure

Study clinicians approached eligible patients and invited them to participate in the 061Quit-Mental study, the day before or the same day of discharge, regardless of their willingness to quit smoking. Clinicians first informed the patients about the 12-month pro-active intervention through a smoking quitline. Clinicians explained the intervention as a strategy for helping them quit smoking by enhancing their motivation to quit, to reduce smoking until they quit, or to maintain the abstinence already achieved during their hospital stay. Clinicians also provided an informative leaflet with the details of the study. The recruitment took place between May 2017 and July 2019. All participants signed a written informed consent form.

2.4. Data collection

This data were recorded with a tablet-specific application, designed for the purposes of this study.

For all patients that met the eligibility criteria, we gathered data about sex, age, and the main psychiatric disorder. Additionally, inpatients were asked about their smoking patterns (daily or occasional); the type of tobacco used (manufactured, roll-your-own [RYO], or both (manufactured and RYO), and cannabis use (alone or in combination with tobacco)); the number of cigarettes smoked per day; the age at initiation; their self-assessed Heaviness of Smoking Index (HSI) (low, medium, high) (Chabrol et al., 2005); attempts to quit in the last 12

months (yes/no); attempts to quit during hospitalization (yes/no); and use of NRT during hospitalization (yes/no).

The main outcome variable was the **patient acceptance to participate in the trial** (yes/no). Inpatients that declined to participate, were asked about their reason/s for declining. The individual selected a specific reason from the following choices: "not interested", "reluctant to provide a telephone number", "reluctant to be contacted", and "Other".

We also collected information about the **hospitals and psychiatric** units, including: the number of beds; type of patients; total staff; staff-patient ratio; percentage of staff turn-over; available smoking cessation service for patients (yes/no); whether they conducted psycho-educational groups during hospitalization (yes/no), whether patients were permitted to go outside the ward; and their Self-Audit Questionnaire score in 2017 (SAQ). The SAQ provided an indication of the extent to which tobacco control measures were fulfilled in the hospital (maximum score: 144 points) (Martinez et al., 2009).

2.5. Statistical analysis

Differences between groups that accepted and declined were assessed using with Chi-squared and U-Mann Whitney tests. To assess the predictors of declining participation, we fitted a logistic regression model. Variables that were assessed with a significance of p<0.25 in the univariate tests were included in the multivariate model. Results are presented as adjusted odds ratios (aOR). Statistical significance was set to p<0.05.

3. RESULTS

Among 530 smokers invited to participate, 294 (55.5%) accepted. The group that accepted participation showed no socioeconomic differences from the group that declined participation (Supplementary_Table 1).

Hospitals with SAQ scores \geq 100 points had higher participation (62.0%) than hospitals with SAQ scores <100 points (37.0%, p<0.001).

Smokers that agreed to participate started smoking at an older age than to those that declined participation (mean \pm SD: 17.4 \pm 5.5 vs. 16.3 \pm 4.4; p=0.002). Moreover, participation was significantly higher among smoker that had attempted to quit in the last 12 months (p<0.001), and those that had maintained abstinence during hospitalization (p=0.050), compared to their counterparts (Table 1).

The main reason for declining participation was "not interested" (78.8%; Table 2). We observed that individuals in different hospitals had different reasons for declining participation (p<0.001). Individuals in hospitals 3 and 6 tended to report "reluctant to be contacted" and "other" more often than individuals in the other hospitals. Furthermore, patients that had not attempted quitting declined due to lack of interest more often than that those who had attempted quitting (82.7% vs. 73.2%; p=0.045). Similarly, smokers that had not abstained during hospitalization declined due to lack of interest more often than those that had abstained during hospitalization (81.8%; vs. 50.0%; p<0.001).

Significant predictors for non-participation included: stays in hospitals 2, 3, 4 and 5 compared to stays in hospital 6 (aOR ranging from 1.79 to 6.39; p<0.05) and no attempt to quit in the last 12 months (aOR=2.42; 95%CI: 1.66–3.53).

4. DISCUSSION

Our findings showed that more than half of the smokers approached in acute-care psychiatric hospital units agreed to participate in an intervention to quit smoking. Our results demonstrated that smokers that had been staying in a smoke-free hospital were willing to receive over-the-phone counseling support to either maintain abstinence or continue reduced smoking after hospitalization. Acceptance rates were not associated with patient sociodemographic characteristics or smoking patterns. However, patients that had attempted to quit during the last year and patients that had remained abstinent during their hospital stay were more willing to participate. In addition, patients admitted to hospitals with high levels of tobacco control were more willing to participate than those in hospitals with low level of tobacco control.

Although the current trend among psychiatric hospitals is to maintain a completely smoke-free policy, (Kagabo et al., 2020; Soyster et al., 2016; Stockings et al., 2015) smoking cessation follow-up plans after discharge are not typically well-coordinated. Only a few studies have tested the feasibility of continuing tobacco cessation support after discharge. Those studies, showed that the support had a modest effect on abstinence rates (Metse et al., 2017; Stockings et al., 2014). Nevertheless, those studies also demonstrated that patients with cessation support had attempted to quit more frequently, had a lower daily cigarette consumption, and had lower levels of nicotine dependence than patients without cessation support (Stockings et al., 2014).

To our knowledge, this study was the first to assess how likely smokers were to accept support for improving their smoking behavior after discharge from a smoke-free, acute-treatment psychiatry ward. Participation rates are not frequently reported in trials (Brown et al., 2021).

Currently, there is no recommendation for an acceptable participation rate in a RCT (West et al., 2005). In the general population, low participation rates are associated with an insufficient sample size, low statistical power, and selection biases (Heijmans et al., 2015). In studies conducted among vulnerable populations, it is vitally important to report study participation. First, it is important because study participation was reported to be lower in vulnerable populations than in the general population (Naidoo et al., 2020). Second, it is important because these data might encourage clinicians and researchers to facilitate patient engagement in interventions that are especially designed for that population (Zwarenstein et al., 2008). However, the few studies that have studied participation, had a small sample size, showed high variability in participation from 29% (Rogers et al., 2017) to 61% (Metse et al., 2018), and did not explore the reasons for nonparticipation. Our findings, with more than 500 participants, suggested that more than half of the smokers included were interested in receiving support by phone after discharge to help them reduce or quit smoking. We found that less than 10% of those that declined did so because they did not want to be contacted. Most of those that declined to participate had stayed in hospitals with low-level tobacco control policies, and abstinence was rarely promoted. This result led us to conclude that hospital tobacco control policy was a mediator in participation rates. This finding highlighted the need to strengthen the tobacco cessation services offered in psychiatric units to promote abstinence during and after hospitalization.

4.1. Study limitations

The main limitation of this study was the introduction of selection bias. Smokers in acute-care mental health wards that showed a strong desire to quit were referred to an intensive smoking cessation intervention (Antón L, et.al 2019); thus, those patients were excluded from the present 061 Quit-Mental study. Consequently, the present study had a selection bias, and our cohort comprised participants that were more reluctant to quit smoking.

Moreover, we selected hospitals by convenience, which were members of the Smoke-free Hospitals Network (Martinez, 2009). This choice could also have led to a selection bias. However, the included hospitals showed a high level of variability in tobacco control implementation. Furthermore, we explored participation rates and the characteristics of both patients and hospitals that participated. This approach offered the opportunity to explore the reasons underlying the variability among patients and among hospitals.

Another limitation was that we did not conduct a qualitative analysis of the reasons for refusing to participate in our study. Future studies on smokers, regardless of their motivation to quit,

should incorporate potential participants' personal insight in the study design to gain a better understanding of the reasons for non-participation. Those results could provide clues to how we might engage patients, or at least increase their motivation level as part of an expected intervention outcome.

4.2. Conclusions

This study showed that half of the smokers were interested in participating in a smoking cessation quitline intervention after discharge from a mental health ward. We identified two main variables that predicted whether a patient would accept the intervention: a) patients that had abstained from smoking during hospitalization, and b) patients that were admitted to a hospital with a high-level of tobacco control. We observed that the latter variable acted as a mediator in the acceptance rates. Hence, it is important to promote a strong tobacco control culture within the institution. This culture should include providing smoking cessation services to trigger abstinence among the group of smokers. Quitlines could become a community-level solution to continue the benefits of smoking abstinence introduced during hospitalization.

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Supplementary Table 1. Characteristics of the psychiatric units in six participating centers

2 Characteristics	Healthcare centers								
3 4	Hospital 1	Hospital 2	Hospital 3	Hospital 4	Hospital 5	Hospital 6			
Number of beds	8	36	29	38	39	24			
Type of treatment									
7 Acute	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Subacute				X	X				
Detoxification	X		X			X			
Total staff (in all shifts), n	24	25	34	21	36	23			
Staff in morning shift, n*	4-5	13	13	7	12	14			
Staff to patient ratio in morning shift	2	0.36	0.5	0.2	1.01	0.95			
Staff involved in recruitment, n	2	2	1	1	2	3			
Staff turnover, %	16.7%	0.1%	10.0%	5.0%	11.0%	40.0%			
SAQ score	129	109	92	73	120	125			
Having a professional of reference in smoking cessation									
Yes	X		X	X	X	X			
Psychoeducational groups during hospitalization									
Yes	X	X		X	X	X			
Approach of smoking intervention									
Behavioral	X		X	X	X	X			
Pharmacological	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Therapeutic permits to go outside the ward									
Yes	In the last admission phase, inpatients could leave the ward in pajamas, accompanied by professionals or family, at a certain time	Once the patient was stable, he/she was permitted out during the day and on weekends with his/her family	Weekends Group permission to go out to the garden without smoking; Monday to Friday evenings permission (a "pass") to go with family (3 h approx.)	30 min in the mornings and 3h in the afternoons, depending on the patient. Weekends and holidays allowed outside from morning to afternoon, and	Afternoon and day permits	Permission to leave the ward but remain on hospital premises (where smoking was forbidden), permits t leave the hospital for 16 to 20h and on weekend for 10–20h			

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32	32 SAQ: Self-Audit Questionnaire	
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^{*}Morning shift was the one when participants were mostly recruited.

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52 53

Table 1. Sociodemographic, clinical, smoking, and organizational characteristics of patients that participated versus those that declined to participate in the 061 Quit-Mental Study.

		Participation						
Characteristics	Category	Overall	Acceptance		Decline			
		n	n	%	n	%	p- valu	
	Total	530	294	[55.5]*	236	[44.5]*		
Sociodemographic and clinical c	haracteristics							
Sex	Male	281	155	55.2	126	44.8	0.8	
	Female	249	139	55.8	110	44.2		
Age, years (mean, SD)		530	42.6	(12.5)	42.0	% [44.5]* 44.8	0.6	
Psychiatric disorder	Bipolar	87	44	50.6	43	49.4	0.3	
•	Depression	48	29	60.4	19	39.6		
	Schizophrenia	220	116	52.7	104	47.3		
	Substance abuse disorder	119	75	63.0	44	37.0		
	Other	56	30	53.6	26			
Smoking	1	l l		· ·				
Smoking pattern	Daily	516	285	55.2	231	44.8	0.4	
Smorning pattern	oking pattern Daily Occasional pe of tobacco Manufactured Roll-your-own (RYO)	5	2	40.0	3		0	
Type of tobacco		361	192	53.2	169		0.5	
Type of tobacco		77	48	62.3	29		0.5	
	Dual use (RYO & Manufactured)	40	24	60.0	16			
	Tobacco (any type) with cannabis	41	24	58.5	17			
	Other	8	4	50.0	4			
Number of cigarettes per day**	Offici	0		(14.5)				
(mean, SD)		530					0.5	
Age of initiation (years) (mean, SD)		530	17.4	(5.5)	16.3	(4.4)	0.0	
Heaviness Smoker Index	Low	148	87	58.8	61	41.2	0.8	
	Medium	204	121	59.3	83			
	High	102	63	61.8	39			
Ouit attained (last 12 marths)	Yes	286	189	66.1	97		<0.0	
Quit attempts (last 12-months)	No	244	105	43.0	139			
	Yes	66	44	66.7	22		0.0	
Abstinent during hospitalization	No	464	250	53.9	214		0.0	
Nicotine replacement Therapy during hospitalization	Yes	359	205	57.1	154		0.2	
during nospitalization	No	171	89	52.0	82	48.0		
Organizational								
Hospital	Hospital 1	89	53	59.6	36	40.4	<0.0	
•	Hospital 2	146	78	53.4	68			
	Hospital 3	41	21	51.2	20			
	Hospital 4	97	30	30.9	67			
	Hospital 5	50	30	60.0	20			
	Hospital 6	107	82	76.6	25			
	I Hospital b							

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	> 100	392	243	62.0	149	38.0	

^{*}Row percentage; ** All type of tobacco

Table 2. Sociodemographic, clinical, smoking and organizational characteristics of patients that declined to participate in smoking cessation intervention for different reasons.

5 6										
7			Reasons for declining							
8 9	Characteristics	Category	Overall		Not rested	Reluctant to be contacted		Other		
10			n	n	%	n	%	n	%	p-value
11			236	186	78.8	23	9.7	27	11.4	•
12	Sociodemographic an	nd clinical		ı						
13 14	Sex	Male	126	100	79.4	10	7.9	16	12.7	0.524
15		Female	110	86	78.2	13	11.8	11	10.0	
16	Age years; (mean,									
17	SD)	D: 1	236		5 (11.7)		(15.6)		(10.9)	0.329
18 19	Psychiatric disorder	Bipolar	43	30	69.8	7	16.3	6	14.0	0.428
20		Depression	19	18	94.7	0	0.0	1	5.3	
21		Schizophrenia Substance use	104	83	79.8 81.8	11	10.6 4.5	10	9.6	
22		Other	44 26	36 19	73.1	2 3	4.5 11.5	6 4	13.6 15.4	
23	Cmaking	Other	20	19	/3.1	3	11.3	4	13.4	
24 25	Smoking Pattern	Daily	231	182	78.8	23	10.0	26	11.3	0.669
26	rattern	Occasional	3	3	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.009
27	Type of tobacco	Manufactured	169	133	78.7	18	10.7	18	10.7	0.269
28	Type of tobacco	Roll-your-own	29	23	79.3	3	10.7	3	10.7	0.207
29		RYO & Manufactured	16	11	68.8	2	12.5	3	18.8	
30 31		Tobacco & cannabis	17	16	94.1	0	0.0	1	5.9	
31		Other	4	2	50.0	0	0.0	2	50.0	
33	Cigarettes per day*	Other	<u> </u>		30.0	0	0.0		30.0	
34	(mean, SD)		224	20.6	(12.7)	16.9	(11.1)	20.5	(11.0)	0.397
35	Age of initiation									
36 37	(mean, SD)		235		1 (4.2)		7 (5.2)		(4.5)	0.258
38	Heaviness Smoker Index	Low	61	48	78.7	8	13.1	5	8.2	0.701
39	ilidex	Medium	83	62	74.7	8	9.6	13	15.7	
40		High	39	29	74.4	4	10.3	6	15.4	
41 42	Quit attempts	Yes	97	71	73.2	15	15.5	11	11.3	0.045
43	(last 12-months)									0.043
44	Abstinent during	No	139	115	82.7	8	5.8	16	11.5	
45	hospitalization	Yes	22	11	50.0	7	31.8	4	18.2	< 0.001
46	nospitanzation	No	214	175	81.8	16	7.5	23	10.7	
47 48	NRT during	Yes	154	120	77.9	15	9.7	19	12.3	0.581
49	hospitalization									0.381
50		No	82	66	80.5	8	9.8	8	9.8	
51	Organizational		I	l						
52	Hospital	Hospital 1	36	31	86.1	1	2.8	4	11.1	< 0.001
53 54		Hospital 2	68	55	80.9	4	5.9	9	13.2	
55		Hospital 3	20	6	30.0	5	25.0	9	45.0	
56										
		Hospital 4	67	65	97.0	1	1.5	1	1.5	
		Hospital 5	20	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0	
60		Hospital 6	25	11	44.0	10	40.0	4	16.0	
56 57 58 59		Hospital 4 Hospital 5	67 20	65 18	97.0 90.0	1 2	1.5 10.0	1 0	1.5 0.0	

Self-Audit	>100	87	71	81.6	6	6.9	10	11.5	0.526
Questionnaire	≥ 100	149	115	77.2	17	11.4	17	11.4	

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Ethical approval

The intervention protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee for Clinical Research (CEIC) from the Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBELL) (reference: PR276/16), and the Ethics Committee of each of the six participating hospitals. The study protocol was registered under Clinicaltrials.gov (NCT03230955 approved the 24th of July 2017)

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