Smoking and Rheumatoid Arthritis: a toolkit for Rheumatology teams
NHS Fife case study

The Fife Rheumatology smoking cessation campaign targeted patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis to raise awareness of the harmful impact that smoking can have on both their condition and also the treatments used to manage it.

The Rheumatology team worked closely with the local Stop Smoking Service to establish referral pathways, and had support from Pfizer to develop the campaign materials and to aid with implementation. NRAS also provided patient feedback on all the materials suggested, to ensure that the messages and visuals were appropriate.

The campaign encouraged and developed relationships with the local Stop Smoking Service and the Rheumatology team that hadn’t previously existed. There was also a significant increase in the awareness of the dangers of smoking for patients with RA.

Many Rheumatology teams are now interested in implementing a similar campaign to help support their patients. Please refer to the full case study document for further information.

Campaign materials

A range of materials have been developed that are available for teams to use. All materials will be customized with your specific local details. The current documents can be changed to provide bespoke materials for your specific needs.

Current materials available include:

- Posters – raising awareness of the dangers of smoking and Rheumatoid Arthritis.
- Postcards – for a targeted maildrop.
- 6-page folding leaflet – with further information for patients to use.
- Guide to help manage the campaign.
- Detailed case study of the NHS Fife campaign.

Included in this toolkit

- NHS Fife case study
- Campaign materials
- Implementing smoking cessation advice for Rheumatology patients
- Looking at each element
- Glossary
- Background to smoking and Rheumatoid Arthritis

This toolkit has been developed by NHS Fife and Pfizer; both organisations are very keen to help and support other teams to implement this project. For further information about how they can support you, please contact your local Pfizer representative.

Objectives for this toolkit

The overall objective of this toolkit is to enable Rheumatology teams to increase the smoking cessation rates of Rheumatology patients. The toolkit will help to raise awareness within the team of the importance of encouraging Rheumatology patients to quit smoking, and offer the best support to help them to do so.
Implementing smoking cessation advice for Rheumatology patients

All NHS staff that are in contact with patients should be involved in a smoking cessation strategy. When smoking cessation is not discussed with a patient, it gives the impression that smoking is not affecting their health. The table below outlines the role and responsibilities of team members with supporting patients to quit smoking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document smoking status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheumatology Sp Nurse</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheumatology AHP</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheumatology Doctor</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists (Hospital and Community)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheumatology OPD Nurse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Clerical</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Practitioner</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Looking at each element

- **Documenting smoking status**
  
The first element is to obtain basic information about the patient and simply ask if they currently smoke.
  
  “Are you a smoker or a non-smoker?”

- **Delivering brief advice**
  
  Showing an understanding of addiction and displaying empathy is important when asking smokers questions. A few brief questions can encourage smokers to think about their habit.
  
  “Would you like to stop smoking?”
  
  “Smoking reduces the effectiveness of your treatment.”
  
  “Smokers need higher doses of medications than non-smokers to achieve the same effect.”

- **Prescribing pharmacotherapy**
  
  Members of the Rheumatology team can prescribe NRT and other medications that help to support smoking cessation.

- **Referring to a Stop Smoking Service**
  
  Patients are four times more likely to quit smoking with NHS support than by going it alone. Referring to a specialist service will ensure they get the best advice and support from trained advisors. Find out the best method to refer these patients by speaking to your local Stop Smoking Service.

- **Audit outcomes**
  
  Rheumatology teams can audit a number of outcomes, including referral rates to smoking cessation services, number of quit attempts per patient and disease activity of ex-smokers. This will support the development of smoking cessation targets for Rheumatology teams.
How to refer
Different Stop Smoking Services will have different methods of capturing referrals. It’s best if the Rheumatology team contact the local Stop Smoking Service directly, as they will probably have referral forms and processes that they can share. Usually, Stop Smoking Services have a set referral form that Rheumatology teams can use to refer their patients.

Treatment options
There are various treatment options available to help people give up smoking. An intensive behavioural support programme of six to seven sessions, combined with twelve weeks of stop smoking medication, increases the likelihood of success by up to four times7. Alternatively one-to-one support can be provided by many Smoking Cessation Teams.

Please contact your local Stop Smoking Service for further information about prescribing smoking cessation medications.

The Cochrane Collaboration is a well-established, non-profit organisation, dedicated to making up-to-date and accurate information about the effects of health care interventions available. This is a good resource for Rheumatology teams to use, to understand more about the effectiveness of smoking cessation therapies and the various treatments available.

www.cochrane.org

Glossary

Smoking cessation
The process of discontinuing the practice of inhaling a smoked substance.

Brief advice
Term which means offering a small amount of information to help a patient understand their current smoking behaviour.

Campaign
Used to describe the marketing and promotional materials put together to help raise awareness of the dangers of smoking in patients with RA.

NRT
Nicotine Replacement Therapy, can be used amongst other treatment options to help a patient to quit smoking.

Referral pathway
Describes the method and process to pass the details of a patient on effectively.

Background to Smoking and Rheumatoid Arthritis

- Heavy smoking can increase the risk of developing RA by up to 100%1.
- RA patients that smoke may have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease2, 3.
- Smoking can weaken the effectiveness of RA medication4, 5.
- RA may be more severe in smokers than non-smokers6.
- Quitting smoking is one of the best things patients can do for their RA7, 8.

References