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Treating tobacco use is an important part of mental health treatment.

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U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence Clinical Practice Guideline 2008 Update

Treating Tobacco use is an Important Part of Mental Health Treatment

Six Things Every Health Care Provider Should Know

Providers who treat people with mental health conditions have an important role to play in their patients' ability to quit using tobacco products. Here are six things that every provider should know:

1. Providing smoking cessation treatment is an important part of mental health treatment.

Providers who treat people with mental health conditions are well positioned to help patients successfully quit tobacco use and enjoy the mental, emotional, and physical benefits of a tobacco-free life. Smoking cessation treatments work.

2. Medicaid reimburses for counseling and covers FDA-approved smoking cessation medications, including over-the-counter therapies with a fiscal order.

Medicaid will cover repeated treatment and prescriptions because it can take multiple attempts before patients quit successfully. Medicaid covers nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) – patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler and nasal spray; and two non-nicotine oral medications (pills) – bupropion SR (brand names Zyban or Wellbutrin) and varenicline (brand name Chantix).

3. People with mental health conditions smoke at rates that are at least two times higher than the general population.¹

They may also smoke more heavily and frequently, compared to those without mental health conditions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that nearly one third (31%) of all cigarettes consumed in the United States are smoked by people with mental health conditions.¹

4. The high rates of smoking among people with mental health conditions have devastating health consequences.

Smoking-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease, lung disease, and cancer are among the most common causes of death among adults with mental health conditions.² Despite the heavy disease burden, a US national survey of mental health treatment facilities found that only about one-quarter provided services to help patients quit smoking.³

5. Many smokers with mental health conditions want to and are able to quit smoking.⁴

Research has shown that adult smokers with mental health conditions—like other smokers—want to quit, can quit, and benefit from proven smoking cessation treatments.⁵

6. Quitting smoking will not interfere with mental health recovery and may have mental health benefits.

Smoking is not an effective mental health treatment strategy. On the contrary, smoking is associated with poor clinical outcomes, such as greater depressive symptoms, greater likelihood of psychiatric hospitalization, and increased suicidal behavior.⁴

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