

IS SMOKING AFFECTING YOUR CHILDREN?



‘Are children that live in households with at least one smoker at an increased risk of developing asthma, or worsening a current asthmatic condition, and what is the role of a registered nurse in supporting families with affected children?’



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INTRODUCTION

One in seven Kiwi children struggle with asthma on a daily basis (Ministry of Health, 2018). Asthma is a condition that causes airways to be over sensitive and react to triggers that would not normally affect other people (Ministry of Health, 2014). To properly manage asthma, it is vital to avoid potential irritants; one of the biggest risks is being exposed to second-hand cigarette smoke, also known as passive smoking. This literature review explores the connection between childhood asthma and passive smoking.

EVIDENCE AND FINDINGS

- Approximately 26,000 NZ children are admitted to hospital every year due to respiratory distress (Asthma Foundation, 2018).
- A study took 126 children between the age of 6-12 currently diagnosed with asthma, and lived with at least one smoker. They found 63% met the criteria for moderate to severe persistent asthma (Butz et al., 2011; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018).
- A populous survey conducted in the UK, that three quarters of children whose parents smoked in their car wanted them to stop and were worried about the effect on their health (Lister, 2010).

BARRIERS

- The significant number of parents that are unaware or unconvinced of the health consequences of second-hand tobacco smoke exposure in children (Hutchinson, Kuijlaars, Mesters, Muris, van Schayck, et al., 2014).
- It is estimated that 8% of nurses admit to being smokers (Edwards, Tu et al., 2018), which seems like a relatively low statistic, but this is still too high. As healthcare professionals, we must set an example.
- New Zealand is headed in the right direction, with the Smokefree 2025 movement, making it illegal to smoke in public places, however this does not protect the most vulnerable, which are children in their own homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance awareness to family and community of the damage that passive smoking can have on children, especially those who suffer from asthma. Primary health professionals are in a prime spot to push education and emphasize the importance of having a Smokefree home.
- The Smokefree Environments Act 1990 (New Zealand Legislation, 2018) has made smoking indoor in public areas illegal, but this does not protect the most vulnerable group, which is children in their own homes. I highly recommend a review of the Smokefree Environments Act to include residential homes with children, as exposing them to second-hand smoke is endangering the welfare of a child.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, childhood asthma is a serious issue in New Zealand that is unnecessarily elevated by exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke by their parents and caregivers (Ministry of Health, 2014). Childhood asthma is a global problem and needs to be addressed in order to prevent children from life-long detrimental effects. To decrease the amount of children in New Zealand society with severe levels of asthma, more needs to be done about education of how smoking harms not only the smoker themselves, but their loved ones who are passively smoking next to them. There also needs to be something done about parents endangering the health of their children by exposing them to the poisons in tobacco smoke. Healthcare professionals need to work in collaboration with parents and communities to educate and inspire, in order to allow all kiwi children to breathe fresh air. By working in partnership with registered nurses, families can make changes to their current lifestyle that will enable their children to a healthy start in life and allow them to thrive to their highest potential.

| PECOT Category | Info relating to question | Explanation |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Population | Children with Asthma aged between 0-14 | During these ages, asthmatic symptoms are most prevalent, with most children showing symptoms before 5 years old. After the age of 14 it is possible children may expose themselves to first-hand cigarette smoke. I want to see the impact passive smoking has on children. |
| Exposure/Intervention | What are the factors that lead to asthma in children and what long-term health factors is associated with exposure to second-hand smoke? | To understand the factors that are influencing asthma in children and if it is preventable by stopping exposure to second-hand smoke. I am also interested in the life-long effects of passive smoking. |
| Comparison/Control | Children with asthma with no exposure to second-hand smoke and the severity level of the asthmatic condition. | I want to see if asthma rates are increased by living with exposure to second-hand smoke and if it effects the level of severity of the condition. |
| Outcome | To reduce the rate of children developing asthma by creating a better understanding of factors that influence and promote asthma, and bring awareness to the severity of smoking around children. | To better RNs and therefore, families and caregivers, understanding of the effects of smoking around children and how it may promote and contribute to the development of asthma but also how it may effect children that already have asthma. |
| Time | The lifetime of the child | Tackling asthma is a life-long project for every individual, or until their symptoms decrease due to lack of exposure to irritants. |

Summary

When presenting research findings, it is important to consider the target audience. The media I chose to use to present my evidence based research is poster form. The poster is intended to target both health professionals and the wider public. The effects of passive smoking in children, especially those with asthma need to be addressed and emphasized. It has shown that poster format is an effective way to transfer knowledge (Rowe & Ilic, 2009). The visual aspect of a poster can be just as influential at portraying the message as the content. This is why I chose a simplistic, easy to follow format. As a visual learner myself, I felt that using the poster was an effective method for raising awareness. I chose green for my color scheme, as (to me) green represents growth, and I think reflects on the message of nurturing our children, rather than stunting them with exposure to cigarette smoke. I also used a gradient scale of green to show the progress of growth.

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