Tobacco Cessation & Control

ISSUE

After decades of declining tobacco use statistics in the US, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that smoking initiation rates have plateaued around 19%. Tobacco use is associated with increased risk for several types of cancer. Recent research has showed that individuals with cancer who continue to use tobacco during their cancer treatment have more negative side effects, higher rates of cancer recurrence, and shorter survival than non-users. In addition to the tremendous human toll of tobacco, the US spends approximately $200 billion annually on tobacco-related illnesses and lost productivity due to tobacco-related premature death. Tobacco use is both a health and economic burden.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2013, ASCO released its Tobacco Cessation Policy Statement Update, outlining their agenda in this critical area. This statement included survey results showing 85% of oncology providers believe tobacco cessation should be a standard part of cancer care. ASCO’s top policy recommendations include:

- Fund all tobacco cessation programs at the CDC-recommended levels to ensure tobacco cessation services are comprehensive and available to all Americans. Comprehensive tobacco control programs remain one of the most effective ways to curb tobacco initiation and use.
- Utilize the tobacco tax and Master Settlement Agreement funds to fully fund comprehensive tobacco control programs, including tobacco cessation training for healthcare providers. Currently less than 3% of these funds are spent on tobacco control activities, leaving these programs severely underfunded.
- Support health plan coverage (with no co-pay or deductible) and appropriate provider reimbursement for evidence-based tobacco cessation services, including counseling, quitlines, and FDA-approved cessation medications.
- Increase funding for research on tobacco control, cessation interventions, and the negative health consequences associated with new nicotine delivery devices (e.g. e-cigarettes), as well as include tobacco use as a core data element in oncology clinical trials.
- Support all efforts at eliminating and preventing youth tobacco use. Efforts to market tobacco products to youth should be outlawed.
- Support the Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act policies, including increased excise taxes, clean indoor air policies, graphic warning labels on cigarette packages. ASCO also strongly opposes any federal price support of the tobacco industry or for tobacco farms.
- Close tax loopholes that tax cigarette and other tobacco products differently. While cigarette use has been declining, use of other tobacco products (cigars, cigarillos, and e-cigarettes) are on the rise. Tobacco companies have used the decreased tobacco control funding, tax loopholes and regulatory efforts to their advantage.
- Increase global tobacco control through support of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the first public health treaty enacted worldwide by the World Health Organization - including support for US ratification of the treaty.

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