

TOBACCO CESSATION CELL

GOVT. DENTAL COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA

The renovated Tobacco Cessation Cell (TCC) at the Government Dental College, Alappuzha, was inaugurated on 3rd June 2023 in the lobby of the college. This initiative aims to support tobacco users visiting the college in their efforts to quit tobacco, offering them a variety of professional treatments and services. The clinic provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to tobacco cessation, combining counselling, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), and various educational resources to help individuals overcome nicotine addiction. The establishment of this clinic marks a significant step in addressing the public health challenges posed by tobacco use in the region.

Objectives:

- To provide comprehensive tobacco cessation support to individuals seeking to quit tobacco.
- To offer evidence-based treatment options, including brief interventions, motivational interviewing, and nicotine replacement therapy.
- To educate individuals on the health risks associated with tobacco use and the benefits of quitting.
- To raise awareness and promote a tobacco-free lifestyle in the community, especially among school children.

Key Features of the Tobacco Cessation Cell:

Location and Accessibility:

The Tobacco Cessation Cell is located conveniently in the lobby of Government Dental College, Alappuzha, making it easily accessible to all tobacco users visiting the college for dental care and consultations.

The central location encourages individuals to seek assistance while they are already present at the college for dental services.

Treatment and Interventions:

The TCC employs a combination of brief interventions and motivational interviewing to assist individuals in their journey to quit tobacco.

Brief Intervention: Tobacco users visiting the college are approached by dental professionals from individual departments who provide brief interventions. These interventions aim to raise awareness about the risks of tobacco use and offer practical strategies for quitting.

Motivational Interviewing: The core counselling technique at the TCC, motivational interviewing, is utilized to help individuals explore their readiness to quit, resolve ambivalence, and develop a personalized quit plan.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT): The TCC provides **free nicotine gums and nicotine patches** to help manage withdrawal symptoms and reduce nicotine cravings. NRT is a vital tool for those struggling with addiction to nicotine.

Assessment and Evaluation:

To assess the level of nicotine addiction, the clinic utilizes the Fagerström Test to evaluate the severity of dependence. This test is complemented by a breath-analyser analysis to measure the carbon monoxide levels in the breath, offering a comprehensive assessment of the individual's nicotine dependency.

Educational Materials and Awareness Campaigns:

The TCC features a variety of IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) materials, including posters, brochures, and videos, which depict the ill effects of tobacco, the benefits of quitting, and the nicotine addiction cycle. These materials are made available for patients to read, helping them understand the risks and motivating them to quit.

As part of its outreach efforts, the clinic has organized various awareness programs, including:

- **Outreach Programs at Schools:** Targeting high school students, these programs aim to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and encourage early intervention.
- **Public Awareness Event at Alappuzha Beach:** A theme dance program was organized to raise awareness about the ill effects of tobacco, engaging the public through performance art to convey critical health messages.

Comprehensive Case History System:

The TCC uses a comprehensive case history-taking system, which includes detailed information about the patient's tobacco use, general health, and psychological factors. This helps in formulating personalized treatment plans and ensures the most effective intervention is provided.

Multidisciplinary Team:

The TCC is headed by Dr. Chancy U, Assistant Professor and head of the Department of Public Health Dentistry and supported by a Senior Resident from the same department. Additionally, a full-time House Surgeon is posted to ensure that patients receive continuous care and follow-up.

For cases that require specialized care beyond the capabilities of the clinic, patients are referred to the Psychiatry Department at TDMC, Alappuzha for further evaluation and treatment.

The Social Worker from the Community Medicine Department, TDMC, Alappuzha works closely with the TCC, providing a collaborative approach to patient care, especially for those facing social challenges related to tobacco addiction.

Follow-Up and Operational Guidelines:

The TCC adheres to the operational guidelines for the establishment of Tobacco Cessation Cells in dental colleges, as set by the Dental Council of India (DCI). These guidelines outline the process for patient follow-up, ensuring that patients receive appropriate care and support throughout their journey to quit tobacco.

Follow-up appointments are scheduled based on the patient's progress and needs, ensuring that they receive continued support to maintain a tobacco-free lifestyle.

Impact and Success: Since its establishment, the Tobacco Cessation Cell has played a crucial role in assisting tobacco users at Government Dental College, Alappuzha. Some of the notable outcomes include:

Increased Awareness: Through various outreach and awareness programs, the clinic has successfully raised awareness about the dangers of tobacco use, particularly among young people.

Successful Tobacco Cessation: Many individuals have successfully reduced their tobacco consumption or quit entirely, thanks to the combination of interventions provided by the clinic, including motivational interviewing, NRT, and follow-up support.

Positive Feedback: Patients have expressed satisfaction with the comprehensive and personalized care offered at the clinic, with many appreciating the accessibility and free resources provided.

The Tobacco Cessation Cell at Government Dental College, Alappuzha, is an important initiative aimed at reducing tobacco use and its associated health risks in the community. By offering a combination of counselling, nicotine replacement therapy, and educational resources, the clinic provides tobacco users with the tools and support they need to quit. The collaborative efforts of various departments, outreach programs, and adherence to established guidelines ensure that the clinic provides effective and comprehensive care. As part of the ongoing public health efforts, the Tobacco Cessation Cell continues to make a positive impact in the fight against tobacco-related diseases in the region.
