



Quit attempts higher on surgeon advice

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Smokers are more likely to listen and take-up advice to quit smoking from surgeons compared to advice from others, according to an article in the latest *ANZ Journal of Surgery*. They also have little knowledge of the risks posed to them from surgery.

Smokers undergoing elective surgery at Peninsula Health were surveyed over a 10-week period in 2011. Almost 25 per cent of patients reported quitting more than 24hrs before their surgery, and those who quit were more likely to have done so on the advice of surgeons.

'Don't know' was the most common response to questions regarding increased risk of infection, pain and complications with anaesthetic after surgery as well as slower healing times. However, when asked about the increased risk of future heart and lung problems, knowledge among patients was high.

The article suggests that "surgeons may have a powerful impact on decisions made to quit before surgery, while the limited hospital supplied information, family/friends and anaesthetist advice had little impact".

"Based on surgery volumes and current smoking prevalence, it is likely that around 360,000 smokers have elective surgery in Australia and New Zealand each year, creating a significant public health opportunity if smokers were encouraged to quit."

Those who smoked up-until surgery were more likely to have received advice from hospital information or family and friends.

The study highlights opportunities to increase smoking cessation before surgery as well as increasing the level of education for patients regarding risks posed to smokers undergoing surgery.

The College's Executive Director of Surgical Affairs Dr John Quinn said that although the study had a comparatively small sample, the findings were, anecdotally at least, broadly supported.

"It would be reasonably common occurrence for certain patients to be blasé about their nicotine addiction and smoking, right up until the time they face their surgeon or anaesthetist and grim reality is revealed.

"This is an important finding. If the 'quit now' message has more of an impact when it comes from a surgeon then we should ensure that message is delivered everytime," Dr Quinn said.

The article recommends further studies are needed to best determine how to deliver information and quit support in the setting of impending surgery.

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



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