DO NRT USERS ADHERE TO THE PACKET INSERT?
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BACKGROUND AND AIM

In clinical trials, it was found that medication for smoking cessation treatment enhances abstinence rates. For example, 23.4 to 26.5% for nicotine patch, 19 to 26.1% for nicotine gum, and 26.7% for nicotine nasal spray (Fiore, Jaèn, Baker, Bailey, Benowitz, Curry et al., 2008). In a cross-sectional study, Pierce and Gilpin (2002) found that NRT use does not improve abstinence rates outside clinical settings. However, the discrepancy between efficacy trials and effectiveness studies may be explained by non-adherence (Burns, Levinson, 2008). This study aims to describe the adherence or non-adherence of NRT users to recommendations given by the package insert.

PROCEDURE

The sample consists of 3,755 adult smokers who attended the German smoking cessation programme „Das Rauchfrei Programm“. The programme comprises six group sessions, and is based on cognitive behavioural therapy and includes booster telephone counselling. Within the programme, NRT is introduced as a useful strategy, but its use is recommended but not enforced.

Among participants 19% reported having used NRT at the end of the programme. Out of these, a sub-sample of N=101 randomly selected NRT users was investigated by telephone survey six months after the last session.

They were questioned on state of abstinence, type of NRT, start of NRT use and adherence to package insert, such as duration of NRT use, dosage and if they used it every day or not.

Subjects were matched by gender, level of nicotine dependence, and age to participants who decided not to use NRT in order to improve the applicability and quality of the study (Raaijmakers, Koffijberg, Posthumus, van Hout, van Engeland & Matthys, 2008).

RESULTS

PRODUCT CHOICE

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DISCUSSION

In a real-world setting, smokers attending a smoking cessation programme do not adhere to the recommendations given by the package insert. As the results indicate, NRT is often used not long enough. No additional effect was found for abstinence rates of NRT users. However, provided that the use of nicotine replacement therapy increases successful quitting, smokers who decide to use NRT should be advised insistently about the necessity of correct NRT use.

The question is how high the input of additional counselling about the correct usage has to be to attain a high compliance and if this additional is of value regarding abstinence rates.