

# Tobacco-Control Attitudes, Advocacy, and Smoking Behaviors of Oncology Nurses

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**Purpose/Objectives:** To describe oncology nurses' attitudes, smoking behaviors, and involvement in tobacco-control policy and legislation.

**Design:** Descriptive, cross-sectional survey.

**Sample:** Responses from 1,508 (38% return) of 4,000 randomly selected members of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS). The typical respondent was female, age 44, a staff nurse, had practiced as an oncology nurse for 12 years, and was certified as an OCN®.

**Methods:** A mailed survey with specific questions about smoking status and the importance of nursing involvement in healthcare policy and legislation for tobacco control.

**Main Research Concepts:** Attitudes about tobacco-control policies and legislation; sociodemographic, professional, and institutional variables; and tobacco use.

**Findings:** The majority (85%) of members stated that nursing involvement in tobacco-control healthcare policy and legislation was important. More than 90% of respondents supported prevention of youth access to tobacco and providing information about health effects of tobacco and cessation. Seven percent ( $n = 106$ ) were current smokers. Significantly fewer smokers valued involvement in tobacco-control activities. Respondents with personal experience of tobacco-related illnesses were more likely to value involvement in advocacy activities. Educational programs to prevent tobacco use among youth and to help patients stop smoking received the most support (80%).

**Implications for Nursing Practice:** This sample of ONS members strongly supported involvement in tobacco-control policies and legislation. Smoking was associated with more negative attitudes about the importance of actively engaging in tobacco control. These oncology nurses recognized the need for additional educational programs to prevent tobacco initiation by youth.

Smoking has decreased in the United States since the 1964 Surgeon General Report on the health consequences of smoking. However, approximately 48 million adults and 4.5 million adolescents continue to smoke (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 1998b, 1999c). Tobacco-control strategies have expanded beyond

## Key Points . . .

- More than 80% of Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) members surveyed strongly support efforts to prevent youth from smoking, provide information about cessation and health effects of tobacco to patients, and ensure smoke-free environments.
- Eighty-five percent of ONS members surveyed strongly endorsed the importance of involvement in tobacco control, but only 6% were directly involved in healthcare policy or legislative effort activities.
- ONS members who smoke have more negative attitudes about the importance of involvement in tobacco control.

individually focused interventions to help prevent and stop tobacco use, to help societal efforts to change tobacco policy, and to assist legislation at federal, state, and local levels (Fishman et al., 1999). Healthcare professionals can enhance public health efforts aimed at reducing tobacco-related death and morbidity by being actively involved and publicly endorsing their importance.

Tobacco prevention and control are of particular concern to oncology nurses because tobacco is associated with more than 30% of all cancer deaths, including 85% of lung

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