

VISN 5 MIRECC Research Abstract

Understanding and Treating Smoking and Nicotine Dependence in Schizophrenia Melanie Bennett, PhD

Objectives. The purpose of this study is provide a longitudinal examination of smoking rates and correlates in two groups of schizophrenia patients: those who are using traditional neuroleptics and those have recently been changed from traditional to atypical neuroleptic medications. We will examine rates of smoking and levels of nicotine dependence in these groups, assess relationships among rates of smoking, levels of nicotine dependence, type of medication, medication side effects, negative symptoms, cognitive impairment, and motivation to stop smoking in these two patient groups, and determine if changes in medication from traditional to atypical neuroleptics, along with a brief smoking information intervention, impacts rates of smoking or levels of nicotine dependence to a greater extent than attending a brief intervention alone.

Research Design. Eligible participants will come for day of testing and complete the diagnostic and symptom evaluations. Following research assessments, participants will attend a brief, 1-hour information session regarding smoking, associated health risks, and behavior change strategies. Participants will then be reassessed at 6 and 12 month time points.

Method. Participants will be 80 patients with schizophrenia spectrum disorders (schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder) who smoke and who are between 18 and 55 years of age, and without a documented history of neurological disorder or head trauma with loss of consciousness. Participants will be either: (1) stabilized on traditional neuroleptic medications prior to their enrollment in the study with no documented plan to have their medication changed from traditional to atypical medications, or (2) recently (within the prior two weeks) changed from traditional neuroleptics to atypical neuroleptic medications. Participants will be recruited from the VA Maryland Health Care System. Eligibility criteria include a chart diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, age between 18 and 55 years, no documented history of neurological disorder or head trauma with loss of consciousness, patient is a current smoker. Assessments will include diagnostic and symptom evaluations, general substance use and use severity evaluations, evaluations of nicotine use and use history, measures of motivation to quit smoking, measures of cognitive functioning, measures of physical health, medication status, and medication side effects, and biological assessments of nicotine use.

Findings. We are waiting for funding for this project; the project has not started and there are no findings.