LETTERS

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Smoking and preoperative assessment

Editor, – The article on preoperative assessment (Aust Prescr 2014;37:188-91) was a good review, but unfortunately omitted the critical issue of smoking. Smoking causes increased cardiorespiratory complications, intensive care admissions, mortality, wound infections and poorer wound healing after surgery. Smoking cessation before elective surgery can significantly improve postoperative outcomes.[1] The perioperative period is a teachable moment when patients are more motivated to quit,[2] and some patients who quit may remain abstinent after discharge. However, many opportunities to assist smokers are being missed and most continue to smoke up to the day of surgery.[3]

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists recommends a simple and brief intervention known as the A-A-R strategy.[4] It involves:

- Asking about smoking status
- Advising smokers to quit
- Referring them for smoking cessation support.

Smokers can be referred to Quitline (137 848), general practitioners or Tobacco Treatment Specialists (www.aascp.org.au). A brief smoking intervention such as Ask Advise and Refer should be a routine part of preoperative elective surgery care for all anaesthetists and surgeons.

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3. Webb AR, Robertson N, Sparrow M. Smokers know little of their increased surgical risks and may quit on surgical advice. ANZ J Surg 2013;83:753-7.
4. Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA). Guidelines on smoking as related to the perioperative period. Melbourne: ANZCA; 2014.

Austin Ng and Leonard Kritharides, the authors of the article, comment:

We appreciate the important comments made by Dr Mendelsohn. We certainly agree smoking cessation is important for all patients including those undergoing surgery. It should be incorporated into a protocol-driven documentation of the patient's risk factors during preoperative assessment as recommended by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists.