Impact of Tobacco-Control Legislation

Barbara J. Henry, MSN, APRN-BC

Oncology nurses should be aware of smoking-related public health legislation and tobacco use prevention resources as well as increase their knowledge of psycho-education materials, medications, and products available to aid smoking cessation. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death; one out of five deaths in the United States is attributed to smoking. Each day, almost 4,000 Americans younger than age 18 try their first cigarette, and 1,000 of those youths will become regular smokers. In 2009, House Resolution 1256: The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act gave the U.S. Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products with emphasis placed on prevention of the use by youth through graphic health warnings. Most states and many countries have enacted bans on smoking in all enclosed public places; however, some still allow smoking in adult-specific venues, such as bars, and some have not enacted any general statewide ban on smoking in any nongovernment-owned spaces. Oncology nurses can be instrumental in advocating for tobacco control legislation as well as providing and supporting services focused on smoking cessation and the prevention of tobacco use.

Background

Prevalence of Smoking

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death; one out of five deaths in the United States is attributed to smoking (CDC, 2008a, 2008b) (see Figure 2). The current rate of smoking in the United States is about 19%, down dramatically from 42% in 1965 (CDC, 2013). However, each day, almost 4,000 Americans younger than age 18 try their first cigarette, and a quarter of that group will become regular smokers (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2010).

Tobacco use causes many types of cancers as well as emphysema, bronchitis, and heart disease. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States; 90% of lung cancer deaths in men and 80% in women are the result of smoking (CDC, 2012a, 2012c). Other types of cancer caused by smoking include esophageal, stomach, pancreatic, kidney, bladder, throat, mouth, and nasal, as well as acute myeloid leukemia (National Cancer Institute [NCI], 2009).