

Attitudes of Future Speech-Language Pathologists about Tobacco Cessation Interventions

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Introduction

Tobacco-use remains a significant public-health problem (USDHHS, 2020). Consequences of smoking and second-hand smoking include impacts on speech and language (Huanhuan et al. 2019; Byeon & Cha, 2020). As a result, the leading professional organization for speech-language pathologists (SLP) includes tobacco interventions in their descriptions of the scope of practice and recommends that SLPs offer tobacco interventions to their patient populations (ASHA, 2016).

We investigated attitudes, knowledge and practice intentions of both undergraduate and graduate students preparing for a career as SLP regarding tobacco interventions. We hypothesized that future SLPs would be unaware that tobacco interventions might be part of their future practice.

Methods

An anonymous online survey was sent out to all Communication Sciences and Disorders students via email. Participants self selected themselves to participate in the survey. Questions in the survey consisted of their amount of knowledge of tobacco interventions, whether they think tobacco intervention may be important in their future career, what would help them believe tobacco interventions were important in their career, and they were informed at the end of what the American Speech Hearing Association said in regard to Speech Pathologists role in tobacco intervention.

Participants consisted of both graduate (n=24) and undergraduate students (n=103) in the department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Oklahoma State University. Most of the sample identified their gender as women (96.7%) and their race/ethnicity as white (87.5%). Most (85.5%) were not current users of tobacco products.



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Speech-Language Pathology trainees are unprepared to intervene with tobacco use among their patients but would like to know more.

I would be more likely to talk to my patients about tobacco use if...



Results

A large majority of SLP trainees reported that tobacco intervention has not been mentioned in any of their classes (92.5% undergraduates, 70.8% of graduates) or by a clinical supervisor (96.9% undergraduate, 91.7% graduates). Despite that, a majority do believe that intervening with tobacco will be part of their future practice (70.1% undergraduates, 70.8% graduates; probably, mostly or definitely yes). On average, participants felt that it was important to intervene with tobacco (mean=78.6/100) but were not very confident about their ability to do so (mean=49.9/100). Trainees also reported a number of factors that would influence their likelihood of intervening with client tobacco use in their future practice. The most important factors include training in tobacco interventions, professional practice guidelines, and research on tobacco impacts and intervention efficacy.

Discussion

The vast majority of SLP trainees reported tobacco use or interventions were important but largely absent from their training thus far. Despite that, participants were mostly positive on whether they thought their future practice would include tobacco interventions. Trainees also reported a number of factors that would influence their likelihood of intervening with client tobacco use in their future practice. The most important factors include training in tobacco interventions, professional practice guidelines, and research on tobacco impacts and intervention efficacy. Future research should investigate attitudes and practices of practicing SLPs as well as larger samples of trainees.

References

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