

## **INCREASING THE SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE STUDENTS' COMPETENCE IN SMOKING PREVENTION AND SMOKING CESSATION**

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### **Summary**

Social and health care professionals are in a key role to prevent smoking and doing smoking cessation work, therefore it is essential to find new ways in higher education and vocational schools to increase students' competences to meet the clients who are smoking and how to guide them to stop smoking. The pilot project describes how the social work and nursing students have designed creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods, which are flexible and easy to apply to practice. Social work and nursing students also implemented designed methods by teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation for the practical nurse students in vocational schools. Developed creative and participatory methods can also be used in a real guidance processes at work when encountering the smoking clients. During the pilot project, students were learning also multiprofessional working, which is important competence in smoking prevention work as well.

### **Introduction**

Finland has an ambitious aim to be a smoking free country by the year 2040. The road-map to this target defines four focus areas: enhancing the positive attitude towards non-smoking; preventing adolescents' initiation of the use of the tobacco products; supporting quitting the use of tobacco products, and strengthening the implementation of the Tobacco Act. (WHO 2015.)

To reach the target of smoking free country all the policy sectors needs to be committed to work for it in decision-making and all the means of preventing smoking needs to be taken in use. The key persons to promote and support smoking free target are the social and health care professionals. It is essential that they all understand the addiction smoking causes, how to prevent smoking, and how to do effective smoking cessation guidance. Most of the people who smoke would like to quit smoking, quite many of them has also tried to do so but not managed. (Varis & Virtanen, 2013) Smokers need support and guidance, and social and health care professionals have an important role in this.

In Finland, the daily smokers are 19% of 15-64 year old men, and 13% of women. Smoking has been declined for years, at the beginning of the century the corresponding figures were men 28 % and women 20 %. Every day use of the tobacco products among the 14-18 year old adolescents is 13 %, as it was 26 % at the beginning of 2000. The use of the electric cigarettes are 2 % among the 15-65 years old Finnish people, and snuff is used 3 % of men, less than 1 % women. The use of the snuff and electric cigarettes has increased popularity among the young people. (Helldan & Helakorpi, 2015; Kinnunen etc. 2013.).

According to the Finnish National Health Institute 54 % of men and 58 % of women would like to quit smoking, but just 3-5 % of them manages to quit totally. (Varis & Virtanen 2015.)

In this article, the pilot project is described where the smoking prevention and smoking cessation knowledge and skills of social and health care students in higher education and vocational schools were increased. In the pilot project, the creative and participatory methods were designed and used for supporting the learning. The pilot project is funded by the National Institute for Health and Welfare.

### **Pilot project**

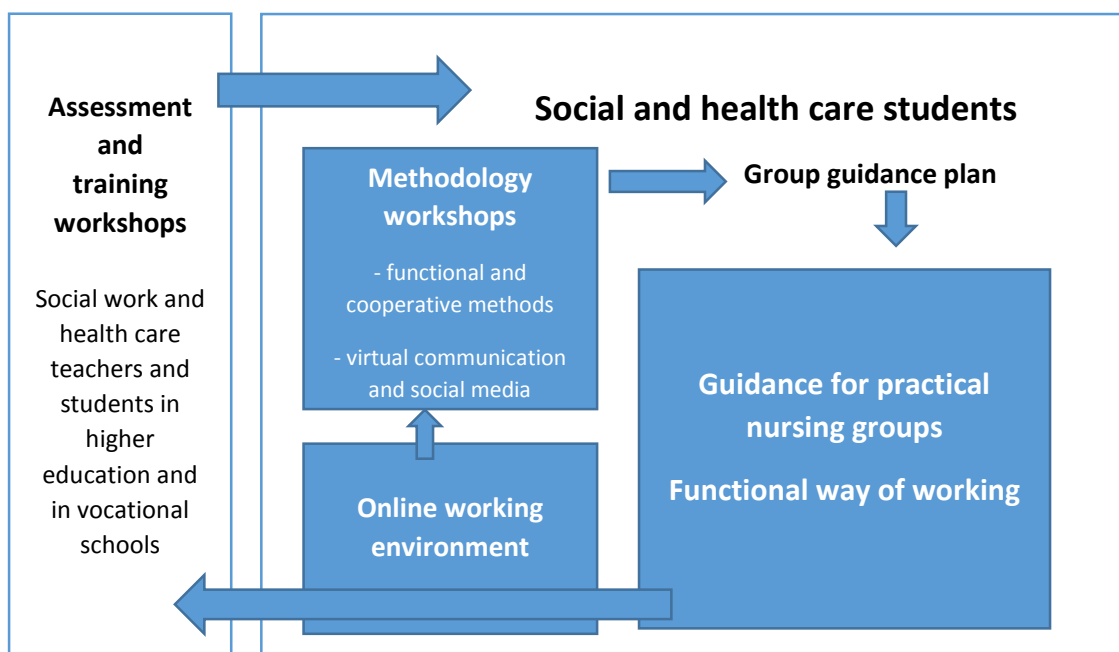
Smoking prevention and smoking cessation knowledge and skills have been found limited in social and health care. The professionals in social and health care as well as the teachers in social and health care education should have the evidence based competence in preventing smoking and guiding the people quitting the smoking. (fc. Ollila, 2010.) In social and health care education on all levels, to develop the students' expertise needs a synthesis between the practical experience, gaining theoretical knowledge, applying the knowledge and constructing the new knowledge (Liimatainen 2002). It is necessary to know what students already know about the smoking, and what their experiences of smoking are. Knowing the students' previous experiences is beneficial when developing new and creative answers to smoking prevention and cessation guidance. (fc. Vänskä etc. 2011)

In this pilot project, the aim was to develop social and health care students' smoking prevention and smoking cessation competences in higher education and vocational schools. The more specific objectives were to improve the practical nurses' professional competence of smoking cessation in the areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to increase practical nurses' awareness of smoking and to motivate them for being smoking-free. In addition, the objectives were to support the higher education social work and nurse students' guidance skills in smoking cessation, and to develop the creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods, which are flexible and easy to apply to practice.

The practical nurse students from the vocational level of education was chosen to this project because after the graduation they are mainly working in the primary health care or social care, meeting for example children and young people and their families, or people with mental health and addiction problems. It is also important to notice that considerable amount of students in vocational education are every day smokers, smoking in higher education is not at all that common. (Kinnunen etc. 2013; Talala, 2014)

The main idea in this pilot project implementation was that the social work and nurse students were teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation for the practical nurses in vocational schools. The purpose was to support the peer learning, and to design and use creative, experiential and cooperative learning methods, which allow participants dealing their emotions and feelings connected to smoking. The idea in working was to find flexible and easy to apply methods to be used in teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation, which fit especially for the young adults.

The number of the partners in this project was three Universities of Applied Sciences, four vocational schools from different cities, and Helsinki University who brought the expertise on health communication and social media to the project.



PICTURE 1. Project framework for increasing the smoking prevention and smoking cessation competence of social and health care students in higher education and in vocational education schools.

The project implementation consisted of theoretical e-learning environment and methodological workshops (Picture 1.). The theoretical content of the study module was based on the Tobacco dependence and tobacco detoxification - National Guideline (Duodecim 2012), as well as the results of smoking and smoking cessation research. During the methodological workshops, the social work and nurse students were designing functional, creative and collaborative guidance methods for teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation for the practical nurse students in vocational schools. The importance of health communication competence was emphasized during the methodological workshops as well as the competence to use digital forums (eg. social media) as an environment to reach young people and to participate them to smoking prevention. (cf. Ruokolainen, Ollila & Heloma, 2013, 645.)

In addition, social work and nurse students practiced Motivational Interviewing method in a simulation-learning environment. Motivational Interviewing as an intervention is according to various studies significantly effective and it has a positive impact on tobacco cessation. MI has been used to decrease risky health behaviors and to increase the smokers' engagement in treatment (mm. Lundahl & Burge, 2009). In the simulation-learning environment, the students practiced their counselling skills in relationship with a smoker. The interaction between the smoker and the counselor is based on mutual respect and collaborative relationship between the counselor and the smoker (Vänskä ym. 2011, 23). The smoker needs to be heard and encountered as an individual and equal person (Rollnick & Miller, 1995; Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

The pilot project has needed a close cooperation between the teachers working in the higher education and in the vocational education, which has also increased the common understanding of the importance of developing the content and the methods of smoking prevention and smoking cessation education. The teachers' expertise from different fields of social and health care was beneficial, especially the expertise on

creative methods, health related communication, and social media were essential when finding out and designing the new approaches to smoking prevention and smoking cessation.

### **Examples of the developed methods**

As a result of the students' learning process and cooperation in workshops they designed creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods, which are flexible and easy to apply to practice. All the project material is available to take in free use from the project site.

(<http://tupakatta.blogspot.fi/> )

The developed creative and participatory guidance methods are under the two main topics: Gaming Tobacco Knowledge, and Practice Guidance Competence. Gaming Tobacco Knowledge includes nine different knowledge-increasing methods. Practice Guidance Competence includes six different guidance methods for students to train their smoking cessation skills.

Good examples of Gaming Tobacco Knowledge is the mobile quiz. In mobile quiz, students created a quiz, which was made with Socrative programme. The questions are answered by mobile phones in small groups or pairs. Giving a right answer makes the spaceship to move on the mobile phone's screen, the winner is the one who has managed to get the ship furthest when all the questions has been answered. The aim is to test the tobacco and smoking knowledge by gaming.

The topic Practice Guidance Competence includes collaborative and participatory trainings. The basic idea of these trainings is that the students learn through their own self-knowledge to be dialogical, and are able to genuinely listen to the smokers. In the drawing practice the students are working in a small groups and they are asked to draw a character, who is smoking. Around the character, the words or symbols are written or drawn, which are describing the character. Next the students are asked what assumptions are connected to the smoker. After that, the students are asked to make the life story for the character, for example using the questions how old the character is, where does he live, what does he do, to whom he is important? Now the aim is to look at the character from the new perspective, and how the smoking is connected to his life and what meanings the smoking might have in his life. The training is closed with the reflective discussion, and learning experiences.

Another example is to use postcards to help students to discuss about smoking. A different kind of postcards are set to the table and students are choosing the one, which they feel that answers the set question. This helps students to find new perspectives to the topic or situation, those that does not immediately come to mind through rational verbal communication. Using the photo guidance method commits participant to think the smoking related questions in a different way than using only the verbal discussion. With the creative and participatory methods, students are activated to recognize their own beliefs and stereotypes concerning the smoking and smokers. It is essential to understand the importance of smoking to the smokers, in order to be able to support them to quit smoking.

### **Conclusions**

In this pilot project social work and nurse students designed creative and participatory methods of smoking prevention and smoking cessation to teach practical nurses in vocational schools. The whole process increased the social work students and nurse students' awareness of smoking both in higher education and in vocational schools. The pilot process also motivated them for being smoking-free.

The collaboration between the higher education and vocational schools was successful and it promoted the non-smoking attitude in both levels. Students in higher education and in vocational education gave a good feedback, and felt that the used methods were beneficial also to be applied in to their work with the clients. All the students brought out that their knowledge about tobacco and smoking prevention, and smoking cessation was increased. The designed creative and participatory methods are easy to use, and can be applied to different teaching situations where, for example health promotion is discussed. The cooperation between the higher education and vocational education was also experienced very beneficial.

In lifestyle amendments the guidance philosophy has changed over the years. From traditional authoritarian education done by the professionals have been moved to the equal interaction between the smoker and the professional. Today, the guidance situation is seen as empowering client-centered situation, where the smoker's own experiences and meanings of his/hers lifestyle behavior are on focus. (Vänskä ym. 2011; Rollnick S & Miller, 1995.) Especially when working with young people, it is important that they are listened and a confidential relationship is created with them. Participating young people to assess their own health behavior with different kind of methods can promote their non-smoking behavior. Along the health guidance given at the school, young people are using social media and smart applications more and more to find answers concerning their health, as well as to support for example smoking cessation. (cf. Ruokolainen, Ollila & Heloma. 2013, 645).

Smoking prevention and smoking cessation requires multiprofessional cooperation. This means that multiprofessional working needs to be practiced already during the social and health care education. Multiprofessionalism is cooperative learning, where the knowledge building happens when students from different fields are sharing the information between each other's. (Katajamäki 2010, 161,26.) The common understanding of the roles of the different professionals in smoking prevention work is important to define. That promotes the commitment of the professionals also to cooperate with each other's when meeting the smokers and supporting them to quit smoking.

The designed creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods can also be used in primary schools and in high schools to participate the students to discuss about smoking, and to courage the peer support to promote the non-smoking attitude at the school. Developed creative and participatory methods can also be used in a real guidance processes to help smokers to raise their awareness of their own smoking history, and the meanings smoking has for them. Methods can be applied also to expand smokers' understanding of their own resources of the various aspects of their lives in order to plan the lifestyle changes. The participatory methods could be beneficial also with the challenging guidance situations, for example with the smokers having mental health problems or alcohol misuse. It has noticed that traditional medical models and guidance methods are inadequate to meet the challenge in smoking prevention and smoking cessation work (Bettcher & Costa e Silva 2013).

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