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Program guidelines for receptionists


The “Drink-less” package has been used in general practice for over ten years. This program has been shown to be effective in helping patients to improve their lifestyle and health by assisting them to reduce their drinking. It involves patients completing a questionnaire on their drinking habits and their doctor scoring the questionnaire and advising them, if necessary, on how to cut down on their drinking. Patients are given the “Drink-less” booklet which goes through their doctor’s advice in more detail. As you will have the first point of contact with patients, you are integral to the success of this program.

A simple step by step guide to implementing the program

- 1** Hand out a questionnaire to **every** patient 16 years of age and over. Patients can fill out the questionnaire in the waiting room before seeing their doctor.

- 2** Briefly explain to patients what the screening questionnaire is about.

- 3** Collect completed questionnaires from patients and place with patient files for the doctor to pick up.



About your role in the program

Which Patients?

It is important to hand out the questionnaire to **all** adult patients (16 years and over) to determine whether they are drinking at levels likely to cause harm in the future.

What do I say?

You might want to say that their doctor is reviewing all patients' drinking habits to give them advice on this important lifestyle issue. 'The doctor would like you to fill out this questionnaire while you wait for your appointment. It will only take a few minutes to complete'.

What do I do if a patient may not be comfortable with reading?

Some patients may be embarrassed to admit they have trouble reading. You can check "Are you OK to fill in the questionnaire, or would you prefer the doctor to ask you the questions?"

How do I know who has been screened already?

By placing a marker in the record of each patient who has been given a questionnaire, you will know straight away whether they have already been screened.

What will the doctor do?

The doctor will score the questionnaire. If the patient has an alcohol-related problem, she/he will advise the patient on how to cut down on drinking and hand the "Drink-less" booklet to the patient.

When should patients be screened again?

Discuss with the doctor how often screening is to be repeated (e.g. every five years).

Program Tips

What can I say to patients who don't want to fill in the questionnaire?

'Your doctor would like to provide a comprehensive service. This includes collecting information on lifestyle and providing advice on improving health. This will help him/her to give the best advice on preventing and managing health problems. Because of this it's important that you complete the form. It won't take long to fill out.'

What can I say to patients who want to know more about the program?

'The program is designed to promote health, especially in the area of drinking. After you complete the questionnaire, your doctor will discuss the results with you.'

What can I say to patients who say that they don't drink alcohol?

'It is important that your doctor has information on all patients so when you come back again she/he will know that you don't drink.'