

Medicines to help People Stop Smoking

The newly amended Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance will be effective from 1 January 2007 onwards. According to a survey conducted by the Society of Hospital Pharmacist, Drug Education Resources Centre, over 50% of the smokers desired to quit after amendment of the ordinance.

Pharmacotherapy being used in smoking cessation can be classified as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and Non-Nicotine Replacement Therapy. Nicotine gum, patch and inhaler are the example of nicotine replacement therapies and available in pharmacies. Meanwhile, non-nicotine medications, including Bupropion and Varenicline, have been shown to be effective for smoking cessation, but they are available only by prescription.

NRTs help to manage the physical withdrawal symptoms. The effectiveness of nicotine gum, patch and inhaler are similar. Bupropion is the first non-nicotine medication approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for smoking cessation, which helps to reduce cravings for cigarettes as well as the physical withdrawal symptoms. Recently, the FDA has also approved another medicine, Varenicline, to reduce the withdrawal symptoms. If the smokers resume smoking again, Varenicline can also block the effects of nicotine.

Different kinds of therapies are available for smoking cessation. People who wish to quit smoking are advised to consult your pharmacists or physicians before using these products. HKU also provides smoking cessation and reduction programme for smokers, which is free of charge. Interested parties are welcome to contact Mr. Yeung at 6752 6266 for more details.