

sensational support to stop smoking before surgery

ELECT – specialised smoking cessation for patients awaiting elective surgery

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Dawn's Story



"I'm numb ... my first Breast Screening and they find something ... what is it? Is it Cancer ...? Where are those smokes? Man I need one now ..."

Later ...

"It's been a hard wait but the ultrasound showed the cancer is extensive but non-invasive. Mixed feelings - still need an Op but not as bad as I thought. Worth celebrating though - where's those ciggies and wine?"

Still Later ...

"It's soon going to be over. I've had my MRI and I'm waitlisted for a mastectomy and reconstruction. One operation and it will all be behind me! Again, they told me to quit smoking but I can't think about that now ..."

Then ...

"I'm devastated I've just heard that I can't have my reconstruction cause I smoke. The Plastic Surgeon told me I have to be six months Smokefree before they can even consider it."

Decision Time ... the story continues below ...

Dawn could have followed this path ...

"He wants to get some do-gooder to contact me and nag me till I quit. I told him not to bother and he gave me a pamphlet in case I change my mind. Where are those fags? OMG I need one now ... but then again ... nah, stuff it, I enjoy it and need it more than ever."

They are still on my case at the hospital. I can't quit and I have tried everything – believe you me".

"Had my mastectomy. So sore – it just won't heal properly. The nurses reckon it will take a while to heal and guess what ... they say it is cause I smoke."

"Used all my sick days and still not feeling well enough to go back to work. Feeling crappy and angry. Thank goodness for the smokes".

"Well the scar is wide and horrible to look at and the plastic surgeon still won't give me a reconstruction. I wonder if I should ring one of those quit smoking places on the pamphlet the hospital gave me and ask for help ... maybe?"

But thankfully she didn't. This is Dawn's actual story:

"He's going to refer me to ELECT. Can't wait ... some 'do-gooder', nagging me till I quit. Where are those fags? OMG I need one now ... but then again ... nah, stuff it, I enjoy it and need it more than ever."

A couple of days later, the "Do-Gooder Nagger" made contact ...

"Jenny from ELECT rang. She seemed nice and didn't nag me once. But I told her that I don't want to quit – what could she do to help me anyway?"

"She's a hard one to shake! Jenny keeps in contact with me and we talk lots about what I can do to help myself not smoke. She seems to get me and my struggle".

"I QUIT! With Jenny's help and the NRT patches, it isn't too bad. Mastectomy booked."

"Healed fast, no complications, back to work and feeling great! Still Smokefree and now working hard to stay that way with Jenny's help".

The plastic surgeon kept to his word and Dawn had her reconstruction. Dawn is still Smokefree over 1 year later and tells everyone who listens, how incredible the help she got was and how proud she is to be Smokefree!

ELECT is more than a tailored intervention for those who smoke!!

ELECT is a facilitated and coordinated approach that maximizes engagement from both staff and patients.

surgery specific, smokefree training

providing effective focused brief interventions

fast and efficient referral pathways

a dedicated stop smoking service

ELECT has been embraced as an integral part of the 'one-stop-shop' surgical pathway at Waitemata DHB.

This successful, transferrable, and innovative solution has proven socially and financially cost effective in a secondary setting.

Smokefree Patient – **better** healing, **best** result to maximise an uneventful recovery, **brilliant** opportunity to begin a Smokefree life!

Abstract

Background:

The association between tobacco smoking and high risks of serious complications during and after surgery are well known. Smokers are 3.2 times more likely to have delayed wound healing resulting in longer hospital stays (Manassa et al, 2003) furthermore; wound infections are 3.3 times more likely (Bikhchandani, J et al, 2007). Based on this and the thorough process report by Litmus in 2011, Waitemata District Health Board developed a new service for those awaiting elective surgery – ELECT.

Objective:

To increase the incidence of patients being Smokefree at the time of their surgery; increasing the likelihood of shorter hospital stays and better surgical outcomes, by providing smoking cessation support which is tailored to a patient's position on the elective surgery pathway.

Service Outline:

ELECT was developed with the understanding that patients awaiting elective surgery may be unable to easily or comfortably, attend clinic appointments. A specialised and highly skilled Smoking Cessation Practitioner can provide NRT in conjunction with intensive telephone, emails, texts and more recently, SKYPE consultations to reduce barriers to access for this vulnerable group of people.

Results:

Over the past eighteen months, ELECT received 358 referrals. Of those, 135 did not engage but received the ELECT Quit Pack; 11 had already Quit; 19 were referred on to other Smoking Cessation Services at their request; and 193 enrolled. For those who enrolled, 45 Quit for Surgery only, 80 worked on a sustained Quit and 68 people have not yet set a quit date. Of the 80 that set a Quit Date, 53 were Smokefree at 4 weeks (66%).

References

Manassa EH, Herti CH & Olschik RB. Wound healing problems in smokers and nonsmokers after 132 abdominal operations. *Plast Reconstr Surg* 2003; 111(6): 2082-2087
Bikhchandani J, Varma SK & Henderson HB. Is it justified to refuse breast reduction to smokers? *J Plast Reconstr Aesthet Surg* 2007; 60(9): 1050-1054

