



Clinical Champion Update

Date: 8/26/19

Subject: Smoking Cessation

Daily aspirin treatment for a lifetime has a Number Needed to Treat (NNT) of 40 to prevent an early death from heart disease.

Screening mammograms for 10 annual years has a NNT of 400-2000 depending on age of women to prevent an early death from breast cancer.

NNT- for minimal stop smoking treatment- counseling alone- would be 52. With optimal treatment- counseling plus medical treatment- NNT is 18 smokers.

NNT can be misleading as it does not take into account among other things the cost of an intervention in time and money or the harm from the intervention. However, treatments for smoking cessation are inexpensive compared to most interventions, require little time on the part of clinician or patient, substantially decrease morbidity as well as mortality, and very rarely cause harm. This is an effective intervention. So the questions we all need to ask ourselves: Why are we not counselling > 50% of our patients? Why are we treating only 20% of our smokers?

In summary, if the early prevention of death is a major aim of clinicians, these results suggest that allocation of resources to promote smoking cessation should be a top priority.

Thanks,

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Smoking Cessation Clinical Champions