

# A novel tool for engaging eye care clinicians in patient education about the ocular health risks of tobacco smoking

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## Background

- Tobacco smoking is the most important modifiable risk factor for the sight-threatening eye disease age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- Smoking cessation reduces the risk of developing AMD and progressing to vision-threatening retinal changes
- Only about half of Australian optometrists routinely enquire about patient smoking behaviours (Downie and Keller, 2015)
- There is a need for eye care clinicians to more actively engage in assessing and addressing smoking cessation with their patients.



## Aims

- To develop a novel, evidence-based clinical tool to enable optometrists to quantify four key aspects relating to patients' smoking behaviours:
  - status (current and former behaviour);
  - risk of developing AMD and risk of AMD progression;
  - level of nicotine dependence;
  - personal motivation to cease smoking.

## Aims continued...

- To undertake a pilot study to:
  - evaluate public perceptions regarding the role of optometrists in relation to providing smoking-related advice, and
  - assess the utility of the tool in a primary eye care practice setting.

## Methods

- A 10-item 'Quantitative Clinical Smoking Behaviour Tool' was developed based upon a comprehensive literature review.
- For the pilot, a convenience sample (n=225 adults), attending the University of Melbourne eye care clinic, was recruited to:
  - assess the usability of the tool, and
  - complete a survey assessing their perception of the role of optometrists in providing care in this domain.

## Results

- Both the smoking behaviour tool and survey were independently and accurately completed by 99% of participants.

## Results continued...

- Key findings from the patient survey:
  - most respondents recognised the broad scope of optometric care
  - ~50% expected their optometrist to ask about smoking status
  - ~70% indicated feeling comfortable discussing the issue

## Conclusions

- More than half of people expect their optometrist to ask them about their smoking habits and are comfortable discussing the topic.
- The smoking clinical tool is feasible to implement in primary eye care practice.
- Broader implementation of the tool into optometry practice is predicted to translate into enhanced care delivery in this vital practice area.

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