



### **Promoting tobacco cessation utilizing pre-health professional students as Research Associates in the emergency department**

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**Objective:** The objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which volunteer research associates (RAs) can be utilized to screen emergency department patients and their visitors for tobacco use and effectively refer tobacco users requesting help to state Tobacco Quitlines.

**Methods:** A sample of 19,149 individuals in 10 emergency departments around the country was enrolled into a prospective, interventional study on tobacco cessation by pre-health professional RAs. Participants who screened positive for tobacco use were provided a brief description of Tobacco Quitline programs and then offered a faxed referral to their respective state Quitline.

**Results:** A total of 10,303 (54%) participants reported tobacco use for more than one month during their lives, with 3861 (20%) currently using every day and an additional 1340 using on some days (7%). Most importantly, 2151 participants requested a faxed Tobacco Quitline referral (36% of individuals who used tobacco in the past month).

**Discussion:** Pre-health professional RAs were shown to be an effective and cost-efficient resource for providing a strongly recommended service in the emergency department. Patient care (and the care of their visitors) was supplemented, emergency department personnel were not provided with additional burden, and RAs were provided with valuable experience for their futures in the health professions.