Association of Smoking Status with Oral-health-related Daily Life Difficulties among Japanese Male Workers

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Abstract: The purposes of this study were: 1) to examine the association of the smoking status with oral-health-related daily life difficulties of workers, 2) assess employees’ opinions and knowledge on tobacco, and 3) explore the necessity of smoking-cessation support activities as part of an oral health program in the workplace. The subjects of this study were 855 male office or technical workers, who work for an electronics company. The mean age was 42.1. A questionnaire survey and oral examinations were conducted from September 2004 to August 2005. The questionnaire items included: 1) oral health behavior, 2) oral-health-related daily life difficulties (five items), and 3) tobacco-related questions. The results showed that the prevalence of smokers was 38.7%, ex-smokers 12.9%, and non-smokers 48.4%. The common oral-health-related daily life difficulty questions showed that 20.6% of subjects felt uncomfortable esthetically, followed by having chewing and tasting (13.7%), speaking and pronunciation (10.1%), work-related (6.1%), and sleeping (3.5%) difficulties. The logistic regression analysis showed an association between the smoking status and oral-health-related daily life difficulties: esthetic problems (OR for smokers = 1.60), chewing and tasting difficulties (OR for smokers = 2.03, and OR for ex-smokers = 1.98), and difficulty in sleeping (OR for smokers = 4.01). About a quarter of the employees answered that smoking-cessation support was inadequate, and 29.3% reported the necessity of smoking-cessation support by dental professionals in the company. Knowledge about tobacco-related diseases (oral cancer: 67.1%, and periodontal disease: 54.6%) was insufficient. These results showed the close association of the smoking status with oral-health-related daily life difficulties of male workers, and the necessity of smoking-cessation support for and provision of information on tobacco to male employees. Therefore, dental professionals should provide smoking-cessation support as a part of oral health promotion in the workplace.

Key words: Oral health promotion in the workplace, Smoking-cessation, Oral-health-related difficulties

Introduction

Changes in the tobacco control policy by the Japanese government have affected the tobacco-related lifestyles of Japanese people. The government enforced health-promotion laws that were aimed to curb smoking in public places in 2003, and signed a collaborative agreement that addressed tobacco control as a global issue at the WHO Framework Convention (FCTC) in 2004. The tobacco-related environment in the workplace has also been changing with the promotion of separate smoking areas, smoke-free environments, and smoking-cessation programs initiated by medical doctors and nurses. The negative effect of tobacco on general health (such as lung cancer, heart disease, cerebral stroke, etc) has been reported, and tobacco is also related to oral health. Johnson et al. and Sham et al reported tobacco use to be a primary cause of oral diseases and other adverse effects.