

QUITLINE SUPPLEMENT

Quitline Activity in China

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Abstract

In order to help smokers quit easier, China has started to provide quitline service since 2004. There are two models for Chinese quitline service-the National Quitline Model, which provides only cessation service to smokers, and the 12320 Hotline Model, which integrates cessation counseling into public health hotline service and is currently adapted in public health hotlines in 28 provinces. A protocol of 4 counseling calls is used by 12320 Hotline. Three-month abstinence rate for clients is about 20%. The fact that most smokers who attempted quit don't seek cessation help or quitline service is not well known by the public are major constraints for quitline service in China. Effective advocating campaign should be implemented to propagate quitline. Diverse protocols targeting different subpopulation will also need to be developed to better service the public.

Keywords: Quitline service - China

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Introduction

China is the largest producer and consumer of tobacco products in the world. There are more than 300 million current smokers in China. More than 1 million people died from tobacco related diseases every year. There are more than 100 million smokers attempting quit every year. Most of them didn't get any cessation aid.

FCTC was ratified by Chinese government and came into force in 2006. Offering cessation help is one of the essential tobacco control strategies required by WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Establishing quitlines, opening cessation clinics, providing brief intervention and medication are recommended by Guideline for FCTC Article 14.

Overview of Quitline service in China

Ever since 2006, Tobacco Control Office, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention has launched cessation clinic training program. Hundreds of cessation clinics get trained and opened throughout the country. With the help of international partners, Tobacco Control Office also developed Manual for Brief Smoking Intervention and helped hospitals build brief intervention capacity. Establishing quitlines is another tobacco control effort in China. In 2004, National Quitline (phone no. 400-885-531), the first quitline in China was established in Beijing Chaoyang Hospital. In 2012, together with California Smokers' Helpline and National Management Center for 12320 Public Health Hotline, Tobacco Control Office successfully launched the pilot program of providing

cessation service in 4 provincial 12320 Public Health Hotline (12320 Hotline). With the funding support from National Health and Family Planning Committee and Ministry of Finance, the program was expanded to all provincial public health hotlines in 2014.

Model of Quitline Service

There are two models of Chinese quitline service-the National Quitline Model and the 12320 Hotline Model. Similar to quitlines all over the world, the National Quitline is an independent quitline center. Providing cessation information and counseling service is its major task. Thus, it can focus on cessation service and can provide relatively more professional service. It is also easier for the quitline to allocate resources basing on the need for cessation service.

12320 Hotline Counseling service adapts a different model. 12320 Hotlines are a serial of government-run non-profit hotlines raised by provincial or municipal health department, responsible to handle report of public emergencies and violation of public health laws from the public, to deal with public complains related to public health, and to answer questions related to disease and health event. Until 2013, 28 of the 31 provincial-level governments have opened 12320 Hotline, targeting a population of more than 1 billion.

Considering the fact that there are limited resources for cessation service, the idea of integrating cessation service into the existing 12320 hotlines came out in 2011. 12320 hotlines can share their phone number, computer, internet and telecommunication service, human resources and management resources for quitline service. 12320 agents

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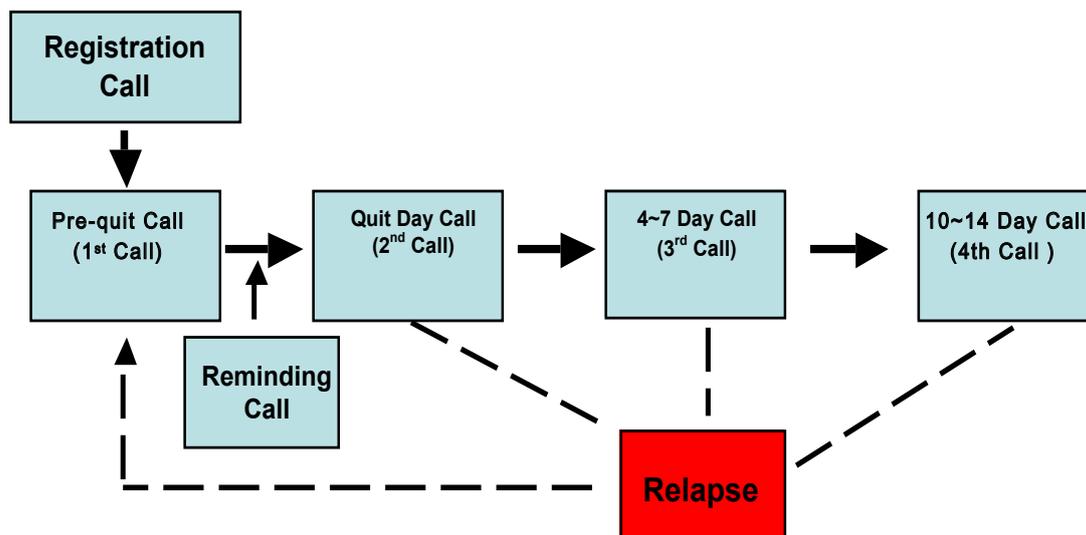


Figure 1. Proactive Quitline Counseling Protocol for Chinese 12320 Hotline

can answer incoming calls, providing information related to smoking and its hazards to clients, and refers clients who need counseling to professional quitline counselors. Tobacco Control Office selected four 12320 counselors and two 12320 managers, and sent them to California Smokers’ Helpline to get cessation counseling training. This model makes the best use of existing hotline system, offering an opportunity for hotlines to serve more smokers with limited resources.

Call and information system.

Similar to modern hotlines, quitline uses call center system basing on server, telephone switches, internet switches, computer and telephone. Phone calls can be quickly picked up, allocated, answered and managed, facilitating the management of hotline.

Staff and training

A quitline generally include several counselors, a manager, and QC staff. Supporting staff include IT staff, agent, managers, and maintenance personnel. Counselors are the core component of a quitline. They should be proactive, passionate, responsible, and willing to help the others. Education background, related knowledge,

communication ability are also considered when recruiting counselors.

Training program is important for the counselors to master counseling and communication skills. Training courses include counseling skills, information of tobacco hazards, cessation intervention strategy and so on. Initial training lasts from 1 week to 1 month. For example, 6 counselors were sent to California Smokers’ Helpline to get a one-month training program. Some other counselors were trained by hotline experts invited to China. Other counselors were trained by these experienced counselors.

Services Provided by Quitline

Health information related to smoking

Quitline agent will answer smokers’ or their family members’ questions about the hazards of smoking, cessation methods, Chinese tobacco epidemic, and tobacco control actions. The National Quitline also integrates automatic answering system providing answers to commonly asked questions.

Telephone counseling service



Publicizing Poster



Public Propagating Activity

Figure 2. Example of Advocating Materials

Chinese quitline service also provides proactive counseling service to smokers who need it. The service usually includes 1 registration call and 4 cessation counseling calls. Registration call collects clients' basic socio-demographic information, smoking behavior, and motivational characteristics to evaluate their addiction level, self-efficacy, etc. Then clients will receive the Pre-quit Call (first counseling call), in which counselor will motivate the smokers in order to increase their confidence and determination to quit, help them make their cessation plan and set a quit day. Some quitlines combine the registration call and the Pre-quit Call. On the quit day, counselor will contact the smoker for Quit Day Call (the second counseling call). In this call, they will strengthen clients' cessation activities, and help them tackle problems showing up during their quitting process. During the 4-7 days and 10-14 days after quit day, the counselor will give clients the 4-7 Day Call and 10-14 Day Call to follow up and give clients support. There are might also be Checking Call and Reminding Call during the counseling process. For clients who relapse, the counseling process will return to the Pre-quit Call. The counseling protocol is shown in Figure 1. Clients can call the quitline whenever they have problem during their cessation process.

Other service.

Some quitlines might deliver a self-help reading material or send follow-up text messages to the clients.

Achievements of Quitline

Before 2012, there were only one quitline in China. Now, telephone cessation counseling service is provided by 12320 hotlines in 28 provinces. The accessibility of cessation service is greatly improved. Data from National 12320 Health Hotline Management Center showed that, the hotline can achieve a relatively high 3-month abstinence rate of about 20%.

Activities for Quitline Promotion

Tobacco control community propagates the Quitline service through various channels and access, including the World No Tobacco Day activities, 12320 Theme Awareness Day activities, and other tobacco control activities. Novel media, such as the Wechat (social communication app), microblog (like twitter) are also used for advocating Quitline service. Some hotline even tried to cooperate with hospitals and asked physicians to refer clients.

Facing Challenges and Future Remarks

Quitlines in China are going through a process of from nothing to something, from one to many, from small ones to big ones. However they still face many challenges, such as little fund, lack of staff, and limited protocol targeting specific population, etc. A serious challenge is that although many hotlines have acquired the capacity to provide cessation service, most of the hotlines are struggling with the fact that only a few people call quitline

for help. Thus, it is important to implement effective advocating campaign to propagate quitline to let more smokers know it, accept it, and use it, so it can help more people.

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