ASHES, Vol. 21(3) – How community-based organizations can provide smoking cessation support

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Editor's note: *Today's review is part of our month-long Special Series on Addiction and Social Support. Throughout March, the BASIS is highlighting the role of social support in addiction-related experiences.*

Community-based organizations play an essential role in providing services and resources that promote the health and wellbeing of community members. Since many smokers already receive services at community-based organizations, these organizations may be an effective setting for reaching smokers and providing them with smoking cessation support. This week, as part of our Special Series on Addiction and Social Support, ASHES reviews a study by Judith Visser and colleagues that examined barriers and facilitators to providing smoking cessation support in community-based organizations in the Netherlands.

What was the research question?

What are barriers and facilitators that community service professionals face when providing smoking cessation support in community-based organizations?

What did the researchers do?

The researchers recruited 21 community service professionals (e.g., social workers, activity supervisors, project managers) in the Netherlands who work directly with clients. Participants were from community-based organizations in districts with high levels of both poverty and smoking. Participants were asked about perceived barriers and facilitators to potential activities (e.g., discussing smoking with clients, collaborating with smoking cessation professionals) they would engage in to provide smoking cessation support to clients. The researchers used thematic analysis to identify key themes.

What did they find?

Five key themes emerged (see Figure). First, *client characteristics* influence the

provision of smoking cessation support. For example, discussions about smoking cessation can be easier with clients who are open to conversations about smoking and ready to quit. The *relationship between the client and professional* is also important, as having a trusting and transparent relationship helps with discussing sensitive topics like smoking cessation. Having *professional knowledge* about smoking can facilitate cessation support, whereas a lack of knowledge can hinder adequate support. The *professional's work environment* is also influential. For example, some participants expressed that they do not prioritize or have enough time to address their clients' smoking concerns. Finally, *organizational characteristics* influence the provision of cessation support, with some participants noting that their organization has no standard process for referring clients to external smoking cessation services.

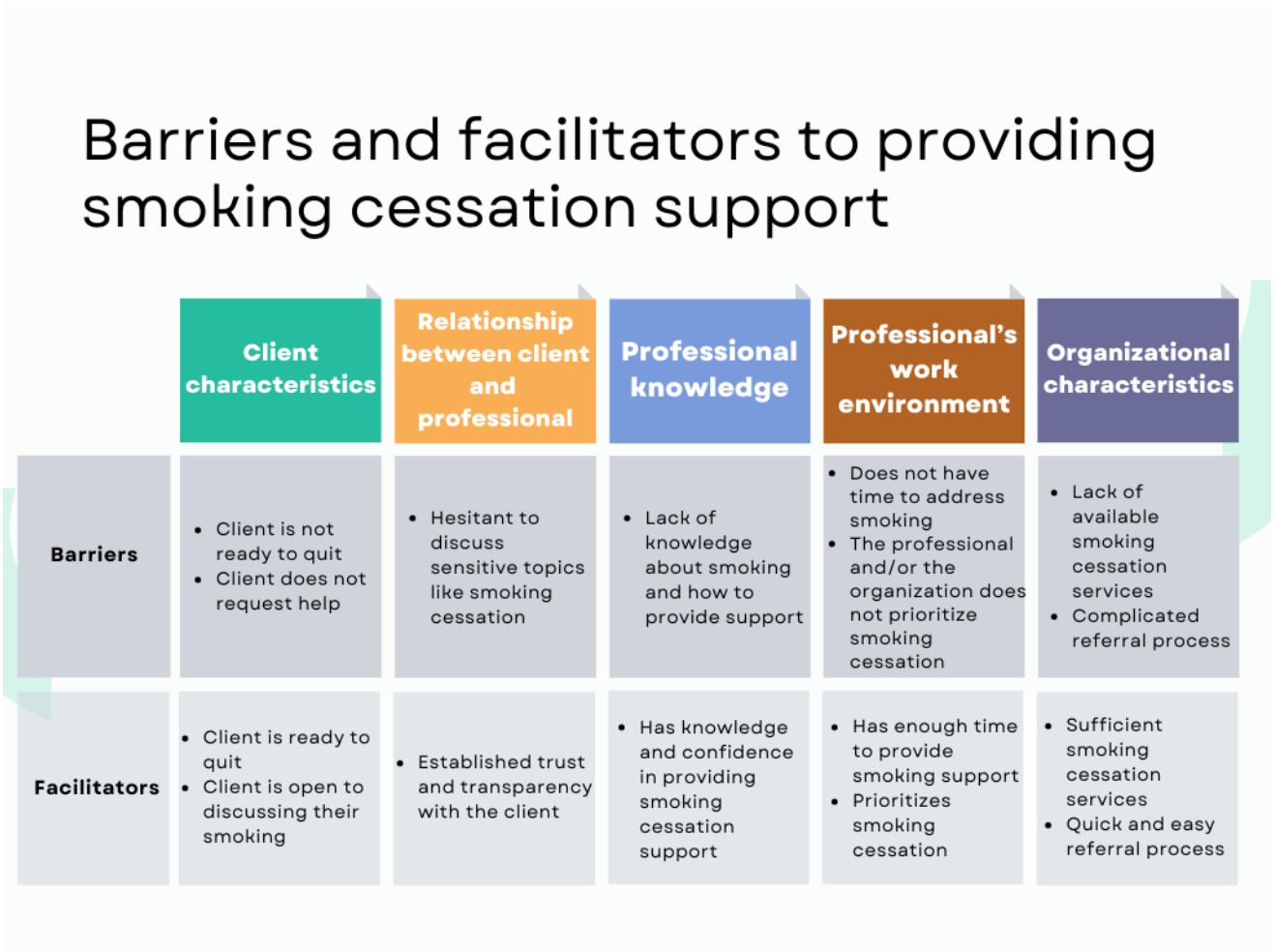

Figure. Key themes relating to barriers and facilitators to providing smoking cessation support in community-based organizations, from the perspective of community service professionals. Click image to enlarge.

Why do these findings matter?

Community-based organizations are a promising setting for providing smoking

cessation support. However, community-based organizations should consider potential barriers to smoking cessation support and take actions to address these. For example, organizations could implement guidelines for routinely asking clients about their smoking, and train their service professionals on intervention skills and smoking knowledge so that they feel confident in providing cessation support. Organizations might also consider conducting community needs assessments to identify and address gaps in their health services and to better understand challenges that their clients face.

Every study has limitations. What are the limitations in this study?
This study was conducted in the Netherlands, so the results might not be generalizable to other countries with different community service structures. Selection bias might have also occurred since the researchers used their existing contacts and snowball sampling to recruit participants.

For more information:
SmokeFree offers tools and tips for quitting and maintaining abstinence from smoking tobacco. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provides research and tips about cigarettes and how to quit. For additional self-help tools, please visit the BASIS Addiction Resources page.

— Annette Siu

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