Public Policy Statement on
Clinical Applications of the Nicotine Patch

Background

The transdermal nicotine patch is a useful adjunct to the treatment of nicotine addiction. Although effective in detoxification, and in relieving symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, the patch alone is not treatment for the addiction. The use of a nicotine patch while the patient continues to smoke can produce dangerous physiologic nicotine effects.

Direct advertising of these patches to the public has led to unrealistic expectations of these devices in some quarters. It is critically important that these patches be prescribed only as part of a planned strategy to stop tobacco use.

Recommendations

ASAM recommends that the prescription of nicotine replacement for stopping smoking is adjunctive and appropriate only in the context of active management for nicotine dependence. Patients are treated for this condition in diverse clinical settings, and the severity and complexity of problems with nicotine with which patients present vary enormously. Therefore, a variety of interventions using nicotine replacement, including brief (five to ten minute) counseling by the physician combined with active follow-up, can be appropriate management in specific clinical situations.

Adopted by the ASAM Board of Directors October 1992

© Copyright 2005. American Society of Addiction Medicine, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission to make digital or hard copies of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for commercial, advertising or promotional purposes, and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Republication, systematic reproduction, posting in electronic form on servers, redistribution to lists, or other uses of this material, require prior specific written permission or license from the Society. ASAM Public Policy Statements normally may be referenced in their entirety only, without editing or paraphrasing, and with proper attribution to the Society. Excerpting any statement for any purpose requires specific written permission from the Society. Public Policy statements of ASAM are
revised on a regular basis; therefore, those wishing to utilize this document must ensure that it is the most current position of ASAM on the topic addressed.