Abstract:
This study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of the educational, self-help book The Easy Way to Stop Smoking by Allen Carr in achieving smoking cessation in patients being screened or currently being treated for cancers of the head and neck.

A prospective, randomized control trial was conducted involving 112 patients being screened or undergoing treatment for head and neck cancer at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital Department of Otolaryngology. Participants completed surveys assessing readiness to quit smoking, amount of tobacco usage, and amount of time actively smoking. The Easy Way to Stop Smoking was provided to half of the patients, while the other half received a recommendation to purchase the book. All patients received physician directed smoking cessation counseling. Phone surveys were conducted at short and long-term follow-up intervals to determine if the patients had purchased and/or read the book and whether they were still smoking.

Of the 112 patients recruited, 93 were eligible for follow-up, and only 52 completed the long-term follow-up survey. The remaining participants were lost to follow-up for various reasons. The patients recruited the book based on whether they were likely to read at least some of the book, p = 0.05, although reading the book did not appear to correlate with successful smoking cessation, p = 0.83. Only 25% of patients who received the book (n = 27) quit, while 32% of patients (n = 25) who were recommended the book quit smoking, although this difference was not significant, p = 0.76. Patients who indicated “readiness” or “actively trying” to quit (n = 42) appeared more likely to be successful than those who would only consider “quitting” (n = 10), but the differences were not significant, p = 0.70.

Smoking cessation rates did not appear to be impacted by reading Allen Carr’s The Easy Way to Stop Smoking. Cessation rates between groups who read and did not read the book were similar, and the small differences were not statistically significant. Despite a majority of the cohort indicating at least a readiness to quit smoking, only a small portion of patients managed to achieve successful smoking cessation. This study seems to support the notion that there is no single method to promote cessation, and that patient motivation remains an important factor in achieving long-term smoking abstinence.

Introduction:
Smoking is the most common preventable risk factor in the development of head and neck cancers(1). Patients who smoke can be up to 25 times more likely to develop cancers of the head and neck than non-smokers(2). Oral cancer patients who continue to smoke are also at increased risk for developing additional primary cancers(3). Smoking cessation can reduce the risk of oral cancer by 50% within the first five years. After ten years, the risk of developing oral cancer approaches the risk of non-smokers(4). As such, it is extremely important to promote smoking cessation counseling in all patients who smoke, particularly those who have already been diagnosed with a head and neck malignancy. Even after diagnosis, successful smoking cessation can improve survival rates.

There are a variety of programs and interventions aimed at smoking cessation, although maintaining smoking abstinence is always a challenge. Printed education materials have been found to improve physician practices, but their efficacy is as yet inconclusive for patient outcomes(5). In the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital Department of Otolaryngology, we believe our one method that may be effective in convincing patients to quit smoking is the best-selling self-help book The Easy Way to Stop Smoking, by Allen Carr. This book explores the reasons people smoke, aiming to change smoker’s feelings about their addictions and challenge misconceptions in order to promote cessation.

This study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of the educational, self-help book The Easy Way to Stop Smoking by Allen Carr in achieving smoking cessation in patients being screened or currently being treated for cancers of the head and neck. Additionally, this study aimed to determine if providing the book for free improved the likelihood patients would read the book over recommending the purchase of the book.

Methods:
Study participants over the age of 18 were recruited during office visits to the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital - Department of Otolaryngology. Current smokers who either underwent screening or were actively being treated for cancers of the head and neck were eligible for recruitment in this study. Consenting participants were randomized into two treatment groups:

Intervention Group: received physician counseling on smoking cessation with a recommendation to purchase the book The Easy Way to Stop Smoking by Allen Carr. The book was provided by research nurses to allow for adequate blinding of the study participants.

Control Group: received physician smoking cessation counseling in addition to a free copy of the book The Easy Way to Stop Smoking by Allen Carr.

Results:

**Abstract**

**Patients recruited**

- 112 patients recruited
- 93 patients eligible for follow-up
- 48 patients received the book The Easy Way to Stop Smoking
- 27 patients completed long-term follow-up
- 44 patients were recommended to buy The Easy Way to Stop Smoking
- 25 patients completed short-term follow-up

**Book Status vs. Smoking Status**

- Received Book (n = 27)
  - Quit Smoking: 74.1%
  - Did Not Quit Smoking: 25.9%
- Recommended Book (n = 25)
  - Quit Smoking: 68.0%
  - Did Not Quit Smoking: 32.0%

**Amount of Book Read vs. Smoking Status**

- Read Entire Book (n = 17)
  - Quit Smoking: 29.4%
  - Did Not Quit Smoking: 23.5%
- Read Some of Book (n = 17)
  - Quit Smoking: 33.5%
- Did Not Read Book (n = 18)
  - Quit Smoking: 33.5%

**Readiness to Quit vs. Smoking Status**

- Would Consider Quitting (n = 10)
  - Quit Smoking: 20%
  - Ready to Quit (n = 27)
  - Quit Smoking: 28.60%
  - Actively Trying to Quit (n = 14)
  - Quit Smoking: 35.70%

**Diagnosis vs. Smoking Status**

- Cancerous Diagnosis (n = 25)
  - Quit Smoking: 92.0%
  - Non-Cancerous Diagnosis (n = 27)
  - Quit Smoking: 25.9%

**Self-Reported Obstacles to Quitting**

- Anxiety or Stress
- Exposure to smokers at work/home
- Craving for nicotine or Habit of Smoking
- Fear of weight gain, depression, or boredom
- Feels unable to quit or lacks willpower
- Enjoy smoking or Cigarettes are not part of quitting
- Feel that others are pressuring
- Other obstacles reported

**References**


**Conclusion**

Nearly every patient surveyed that read the book enjoyed the The Easy Way to Stop Smoking. They found it helpful and informative, although it small percentage of patients managed to translate the book’s message into practice and achieve smoking cessation. Due to the small sample size, it is difficult to make any concrete conclusions about the efficacy of Allen Carr’s The Easy Way to Stop Smoking, although the small percentage of patients who did quit smoking suggests there is no single “magic bullet” approach that can tackle the intense nicotine addiction. Identifying a patient’s motivation to quit may be a useful tool in tailoring future cessation strategies and treatment, but achieving long-term smoking cessation still remains a major challenge to both patients and otolaryngologists. Any attempts at promoting smoking abstinence should likely involve a multifaceted approach.

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