An examination of policies addressing resident smoking in Ontario, Canada’s private long-term care facilities

Ashworth J, Watt C and Kulak J

1 State University of New York - The College at Brockport, USA
2 University at Buffalo, USA

Ontario, Canada is currently the only province in Canada with legislation requiring the mandatory implementation of automatic sprinklers in retirement homes. Changes to the province’s fire code are a direct response to the 2009 presumed tobacco-related fire in a retirement home in Orillia, Ontario. In May 2013, the Ministry of Safety and Community Services announced significant amendments to the fire code, requiring all retirement homes in Ontario to install automatic sprinklers by 2018. While sprinklers are an important step in protecting residents in the event of a fire, prevention of tobacco-related fires can be realized when effective tobacco use policies are implemented that safeguard not only against fires, but other health hazards as well (e.g. burns or exposure to environmental tobacco smoke to non-smokers). The purpose of this study is to examine Ontario’s retirement home tobacco policies for residents and to determine the impact of current legislation. In a random selection process of 686 retirement homes, this study examines tobacco-related policies using a rubric scoring system to rate the comprehensiveness of the policies. Although retirement homes may indeed engage in practices that are more comprehensive than the policies portray, implementing policies and subsequent training to ensure compliance are a first step in safeguarding the needs of smokers and non-smokers alike.

jashw1@u.brockport.edu