Youth Antismoking Program Gets Latino Twist

February 7, 2011

The award-winning web-based teen prevention and smoking cessation program ASPIRE (A Smoking Prevention Interactive Experience) is learning a new language, Spanish, according to a statement from the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, which developed the program a decade ago.

The center created ASPIRE to help prevent middle and high school students from smoking or to help them quit before it became a lifelong addiction. Nearly 20 percent of Latino high school students smoke. The site, which integrates interactive media, customized messages, graphics, animations and streaming video, is now being translated into Spanish so it can reach these Latinos.

“We’ve found that participating students are more aware about the dangers of smoking, are making more informed decisions about smoking and are less tempted to start in the first place,” said Alexander V. Prokhorov, MD, PhD, who developed the program at MD Anderson. “Removing the language barrier will help tremendously in reaching and educating Hispanic teens, especially those experiencing difficulties with English comprehension.”

The Spanish version of ASPIRE will contain three modules, each designed for a student, administrator or curious guest. Each module will contain peer testimonials, health information, tips and resources, and intervention methods for students who are planning to quit.

The program will also give users the chance to become ASPIRE graduates and earn a certificate after completing the program. Currently, 21 states are using ASPIRE and more than 6,000 people have accessed the web site.

“The program has really evolved over the years, and we expect that the new Spanish version will be successful in increasing our reach to Hispanic teens,” said Lauren McCoy, ASPIRE program manager at MD Anderson. “We’ve seen steady growth of institutions, schools and organizations incorporating ASPIRE in their programs.”

The program, which is currently funded by the Tobacco Settlement Funds to the State of Texas, is a free resource to school districts, state health departments, teachers and parents. Log on to mdanderson.org/aspire for more information.

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