
Secondhand Smoking In Flight Attendants

Introduction

Within our time in our life, we have at least once gone on an airline flight and have had outstanding service by our flight attendants. These flight attendants make sure that each person on this aircraft is comfortable, well taken care of, and makes sure that they are satisfied by the time they leave this aircraft. However, on occasion, these flight attendants are often exposed to harmful contaminants by fellow passengers who smoke during long layovers or by people smoking at local spots near airports. These harmful contaminants often risk the health of our flight attendants, therefore putting them at risk just by not adhering to smoke-free airplanes. In regards to this specific study and its participants, flight attendants are severely understudied, to which this study was designed to figure out how their exposure is affecting them and where they are getting exposed more frequently.

Gathering Background Information

Before the law to ban smoking in planes in 1971, some passengers took advantage of smoking in planes but didn't seem to take into consideration of the harmful effects it has on passengers that were aboard this plane, which includes babies, expectant mothers, flight attendants, etc. These habits that smokers have are often caused by smoking habits, ventilation systems, the increase in smokers on planes, and smoking behaviors (Liu, Cooper, Hammond, 2015). Not only were they a risk to their own health, but even to the risk of the people around them who also are not regular smokers or have been exposed to secondhand smoking before.

The population that this case study measured was recruited from an electronic flyer that was given to the flight attendant union, as well as advertisements on social media sites. This study specifically targeted participants of ages 18 to 65. The question they wanted to gain more information about was the flight attendants' attitudes towards Secondhand Smoking, as well as their exposure to SHS. During their survey, they were given questions such as: Are you a flight attendant? Did you work as a flight attendant in the past 12 months? Did you fly internationally for work? How many times did you fly internationally for work? With these questions, they were able to determine whether a participant was able to qualify for this study and who wasn't able to participate. In this study, there were a total of 723 flight attendants were in this study, when broken down is 132 participants had no values for age, gender, and country of origin, which had a remaining 591 (Liu, Cooper, Hammond, 2015).

Analyze the Current Situation

Some flight attendants reported that they have experienced eye irritation, nasal congestion, and respiratory symptoms due to exposure to smoking while aboard the aircraft (Beaty, Haight, Redberg, 2011). Though the allowing of smoking in flights has been banned, there are still instances where flight attendants are still being affected in public areas due to contaminants being held in the air. For example, the graph (attached at the end) shows that flight attendants have been exposed to secondhand smoking in public areas outside of the airport more

frequently than inside places that are designated for smoking (Stillman, Soong, Zheng, and Navas-Acien, 2015). The amount of smoking that has been noted in this study has slightly increased between the years 1955-1965 because of their nicotine addiction. With an increase in smokers around airports and airline flights, the exposure to secondhand smoking by flight attendants is higher than it would if smokers weren't lounging around with their addiction to nicotine. (Liu, Cooper, and Hammond, 2015). Due to the amount of smoking that was done in the cabin, flight attendants often complained about stinging eyes due to the thickness of the smoke and how much it stung when they had to walk down the aisle multiple times. Due to the nature of secondhand smoking, some people had the lungs of smokers but they have never smoked before. Some people even passed away due to lung cancer, which shows that these symptoms aren't small, but huge.

The mission statement for secondhand smoking in flight attendants is from the company FAMRI, Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute, which helps detect early symptoms and diagnosis of exposure to secondhand smoke. They mostly work with flight attendants who have been exposed to secondhand smoking for long periods of time. In addition to this, they also try to find similarities and differences between the years when smoking was banned for flights and before it was banned. They also create surveys for flight attendants to complete to understand whether there is new information about exposure or if it's still the same things being affected. There are lab testings that are conducted within a set timeframe which can help eliminate any potential threats that arise with the exposure of SHS.

According to the SWOT analysis for secondhand smoking, they are as followed. Strengths: In 1990, smoking on airplanes was banned for all domestic flights, as well as smoking indoors around the population (Liu, Cooper and Hammond, 2015). These risks are higher because, with secondhand smoking, the flight attendants are at risk for lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory problems, and as well as pulmonary heart disease (McNeely, Mordukhovich, Staffa, Tideman, Coull, 2019). With these instances of side effects of secondhand smoke, there is an increase in flight attendants being consistently exposed if no action is taken. So with the banning of in-flight smoking, as well as indoor smoking, helps to prevent such things to happen. Weakness: With secondhand smoking, there aren't many rules preventing people from smoking in the proximity of flight attendants. In addition to rules not being set in place, there are also side effects that can weaken a person's health, such as cancer, respiratory diseases, and pulmonary disease. Opportunity: To help create a just environment for flight attendants, there should be campaigns, as well as creating areas specified for smokers. These spaces should be in spaces away from the flight attendants, in cases where they are waiting for their layover. These designated spaces should be spacious enough to fit smokers and put them away from the general public. Threats: Without any media or spokesperson, there isn't much advertising or campaigns set in place to advocate for the health of the flight attendants. These advertisements, help people understand the dangers of secondhand smoking, but without anyone advocating for them, it creates an unjust environment for these workers.

Prioritize Issues

Being affected by secondhand smoking creates a problem for the workers' own health. Not only does it make it an inhabitable place to work, but it makes them more susceptible to the side effects that they can get from secondhand smoking. Before the banning of smoking in airline flights was issued and put in place, some people smoked inside planes and due to poor

ventilation problems, it became an issue for not only flight attendants, but for everyone on that same airplane (McNeely, Mordukhovich, Staffa, Tideman, Coull, 2019). Without any ventilation, the air being circulated in the airplane is shared and everyone is exposed. In addition to poor ventilation, there is also the cause of designated areas. Many times, smokers don't stick to smoking only in designated areas specified in airports. Because no laws and people being working at airports not speaking up, there are often people who lounge around close enough to the public and expose them to these contaminants.

Due to these causes of secondhand smoking exposure to flight attendants, there are mandated laws set in place now to assure that these workers as well as the general public aren't exposed as easily to secondhand smoking. Not only are you required to only smoke in these areas where it's specified, but there are signs posted indicating whether smoking is allowed to help divide the people who do smoke and don't smoke.

Analyze Alternatives

In regards to secondhand smoking, the solution within this would be to inform the public about different ways we can prevent others from being exposed to SHS. In addition, banning smoking in airline flights in 1990 was also another solution that did help those in the airline flights to benefit immensely from this (Beaty, Haight, Redberg, 2015).

To benefit the community, future flight attendants, as well as the general public, the public health communication model would be the most appropriate to assist with communicating with the public about secondhand smoking. Secondhand smoking is something that can easily be fixed with a few concepts, messages, and materials. With a better understanding of the detrimental effects that it can have on someone's health, we can better be suited for changing ways of exposing others to this health-hazardous habit. The public health communication model will help us create a better atmosphere that will both benefit the general public, workers at airports, and smokers.

The best solution in cases where you come across secondhand smoking near airports is to walk away or advise them to go to the designated areas. In addition, secondhand smoke is harmful to babies and children the most, so it is best to walk away if you are coming close to someone who is smoking in public and not in the designated areas. In the article by Kegler, Lebow-Skelley, Lea, Haardörfer, Lefevre, Diggs, and Herdon, they talk about housing policies, but I think the same should apply to the public spaces, such as airports and airline flights. In public spaces, it's important to put the public's health and interests first. By this, it means smoke-free zones should be implemented and be enforced where it is concerned. Solutions shouldn't just be focused on flight attendants alone, but rather everyone around them.

Provide Recommendations

One recommendation that can be implemented is to require a no smoking policy indoors. Though this can be hard for smokers, it will help to eliminate the toxins in the air to be clear and rid of these contaminants (Young, Karp S, Bialick, Liverance, Seder, Berg, and Karp L). Another recommendation is if you do smoke and are scared of risking secondhand smoke to those around you, try your best to avoid those who are pregnant or children. The statistics of pregnant women staying away from smokers have increased from 18.3% to 70.2%. They were

also telling their husbands to stay away from smoke as the scent can also be concluded as secondhand smoke (Zhang L, Hsia, Tu, Xia, Bi..., 2015). The third recommendation is to find places where smoke-free rules are put in place because secondhand smoke is very dangerous to one's health and can give lots of complications (Naeem, 2015).

The recommendations that I have for secondhand smoking in flight attendants are important because knowing how to handle secondhand smoking is something that people should know more about. Not only are you supposed to have these recommendations for your own safety, but others as well. Secondhand smoking causes complications in the long run and creating a safe and habitable atmosphere is beneficial, especially to children and pregnant women. These recommendations can also help flight attendants know what they can do to prevent instances where they are exposed to large amounts of secondhand smoke. Being healthy as a flight attendant is important because you are around people who you are to provide excellent customer service, and if you aren't healthy, you can't be working at a job that requires a lot of movement as well as flying for hours in.

Establish Action Plan

Airports should have repeated announcements over the loudspeakers that go over the rules and consequences if they don't follow rules. In addition to this, I feel there should be officials who work for the airport to be patrolling and making sure that people are smoking in the designated areas. Because airports are very fast-paced and nothing ever slows down, there should be signs to let people know about the rules. In airline crafts, it goes hand in hand with the announcements letting them know that smoking is banned in airline flights due to poor ventilation systems. I believe that because of how flammable lighters are, these are banned as of today, but to be safe, they shouldn't be allowed to be bought after the metal detectors either.

To implement these rules, not only is it the people who smoke responsibility but also the public to look out for one another. These rules can be easily broken but if we work with each other to help one another, we can easily create an environment that everyone can exist in. In addition to this, flight attendants can have a job that doesn't create a risk for their health.

For this specific action plan, this plan should be done by the year 2021. Within those two years from 2019-2021, we should be able to have a firmer grasp on what smoke-free zones and smoke-free environments can do. Again, it doesn't benefit one specific group, but rather a whole bunch of different groups. In addition, CDC and FAMRI should continuously work with the public and continue surveying flight attendants to detect any early symptoms they may have. Regular checkups with the doctor can help detect any signs of secondhand smoke complications.

Conclusion

Secondhand smoking is something that is looked at very heavily because of its dire effect on someone's own health. These risks come with complications and can often result in death. We, as the public, shouldn't look at this issue as lightly or something that we can brush off to the side, because these kinds of symptoms that can arise from secondhand smoking, can ultimately create many problems and create lots of messes that we cannot clean up without policies set in place. In particular, flight attendants, have the worst interactions with secondhand smoking

because airports and airline flights are considered “public spaces”. With these kinds of enclosed public spaces, we don’t notice how heavily they are exposed to such contaminants and we assume nothing can arise from that. However, with large amounts of secondhand smoke, they can get lung cancer, respiratory problems, and cardiovascular disease. These kinds of complications not only create a problem for them but also can create a problem for their own lifestyle. People who have been exposed to secondhand smoke are usually people who have never smoked a day in their life, yet have the same symptoms and complications as those who have been smoking their whole life. We should follow the rules and laws that are set in place for us to follow because it’s not there for us to read and simply not follow, but it’s there for our own benefit.

Comparing the US’ secondhand smoking, it is very similar to Korea. Korea is a very smoking dependant country and speaking from personal experience, it’s inevitable. People are smoking everywhere they go so it creates an atmosphere where you cannot escape SHS and poses a problem for young children and pregnant women. The policies that Korea has aren’t as dire and strict as the US is, because even in restaurants, there are people who smoke. I believe that the US has a chance to change its ways and create an atmosphere where we can all mutually live and not have any second thoughts. No one likes secondhand smoking, especially because from prior knowledge, we know how dangerous this is. To conclude, being in a world where it’s mutually understood that secondhand smoking for flight attendants is a bad thing is something that they can live by. We should not only create a place for them to strive but also be able to love their job. They are there to help us have a comfortable experience traveling, and we should be able to do the same for them as well.