

The conceptual framework of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Policy Evaluation Project

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Abstract

This paper describes the conceptual model that underlies the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC Project), whose mission is to measure the psychosocial and behavioural impact of key policies of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) among adult smokers, and in some countries, among adult non-smokers and among youth. The evaluation framework utilises multiple country controls, a longitudinal design, and a pre-specified, theory-driven conceptual model to test hypotheses about the anticipated effects of specific policies. The ITC Project consists of parallel prospective cohort surveys of representative samples of adult smokers currently in nine countries (inhabited by over 45% of the world's smokers), with other countries being added in the future. Collectively, the ITC Surveys constitute the first-ever international cohort study of tobacco use. The conceptual model of the ITC Project draws on the psychosocial and health communication literature and assumes that tobacco control policies influence tobacco related behaviours through a causal chain of psychological events, with some variables more closely related to the policy itself (policy-specific variables) and other variables that are more downstream from the policy, which have been identified by health behaviour and social psychological theories as being important causal precursors of behaviour (psychosocial mediators). We discuss the objectives of the ITC Project and its potential for building the evidence base for the FCTC.

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