

Do smokers know how to quit? Knowledge and perceived effectiveness of cessation assistance as predictors of cessation behaviour

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Abstract

Aims: Despite the existence of effective cessation methods, the vast majority of smokers attempt to quit on their own. To date, there is little evidence to explain the low adoption rates for effective forms of cessation assistance, including pharmaceutical aids. This study sought to assess smokers' awareness and perceived effectiveness of cessation methods and to examine the relationship of this knowledge to cessation behaviour.

Design: A random-digit-dial telephone survey (response rate = 76%) with 3-month follow-up was conducted with 616 adult daily smokers in South-Western Ontario, Canada.

Measurements: A baseline survey assessed smoking behaviour, as well as smokers' awareness and perceived effectiveness of cessation assistance. A follow-up survey measured changes in smoking behaviour and adoption of cessation assistance at 3 months.

Findings: Participants demonstrated a poor recall of cessation methods: 45% of participants did not recall nicotine gum, 33% did not recall the nicotine patch and 57% did not recall bupropion. Also, many participants did not believe that the following cessation methods would increase their likelihood of quitting: nicotine replacement therapies (36%), bupropion (35%), counselling from a health professional (66%) and group counselling/quit programmes (50%). In addition, 78% of smokers indicated that they were just as likely to quit on their own as they were with assistance. Most important, participants who perceived cessation methods to be effective at baseline, were more likely to intend to quit (OR = 1.80, 95% CI: 1.12–2.90), make a quit attempt at follow-up (OR = 1.80, 95% CI: 1.03–3.16) and to adopt cessation assistance when doing so (OR = 3.62, 95% CI: 1.04–12.58).

Conclusions: This research suggests that many smokers may be unaware of effective cessation methods and most underestimate their benefit. Further, this lack of knowledge may represent a significant barrier to treatment adoption.

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