

Reported exposures to anti-smoking messages and their impact on Chinese smokers' subsequent quit attempts

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: It is important to monitor whether anti-smoking messages (if any) are noticed by the public in China and whether they have any impact on smokers' quitting behaviours over time **PURPOSE:** This study aimed to examine Chinese smokers' exposure to anti-smoking messages in a range of channels and to determine if exposure was associated with subsequent quit attempts.

METHOD: A prospective cohort design was employed. Participants were 6,509 adult smokers who completed at least one of the first three waves (2006-2009) of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) China Survey sampled from six Chinese cities. The main measures were reported exposure to anti-smoking messages in a range of channels and smokers' subsequent quit attempts. Generalized Estimating Equations (GEE) modelling was used to combine respondents from all three waves while accounting for inherent within-person correlation.

RESULTS: The overall exposure levels to anti-smoking messages were low and varied between cities and from one channel to another. Television was the medium with the greatest overall exposure (over 50 % in almost all the cities across all the waves). After controlling for a range of covariates, higher level of combined exposure were positively related to higher subsequent quit attempts (adjusted odds ratio = 1.03, 95 % CI 1.02 ~ 1.05, $p < .001$); among the individual channels, exposures in newspapers and on posters were significant in their own right.

CONCLUSION: The findings suggest that anti-smoking warning messages have the potential to stimulate Chinese smokers to make quit attempts, but they also indicate that the levels and strength of warning messages in China need to be increased. China should consider adopting proven international practices, including mandating pictorial health warnings on cigarette packages, adopting prominent point-of-sale warnings, and carrying out strong and ongoing mass media campaigns.

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