

# Attitudes towards smoking and COVID-19, and changes of smoking behaviors before and after the outbreak of COVID-19: A nationwide cross-sectional survey study in China

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## **Abstract**

### **Introduction:**

China has more than 300 million current smokers. There is a controversy over smokers' risk of COVID-19 infection. Smoking is a risk factor for COVID-19 disease progression, and the outbreak of COVID-19 may change people's smoking behaviors. This study assessed people's attitudes towards 'smoking and COVID-19' and changes of smoking behaviors before and after the outbreak of COVID-19.

### **Material and Methods:**

A cross-sectional web survey of 11009 adults in China was conducted between 7 May and 3 August 2020. Attitudes towards 'smoking and COVID-19' were compared among non-smokers (n=8837), ex-smokers (n=399) and current smokers (n=1773), and changes in smoking behaviors before and after the outbreak of COVID-19 were assessed among current smokers.

### **Results:**

Fewer current smokers (26.2%) agreed with the statement that 'Current smokers are more likely than ex-smokers or non-smokers to contract COVID-19' compared with non-smokers (53%) or ex-smokers (41.4%); fewer current smokers (55.9%) agreed with the statement 'If contracted, current smokers are more likely than ex-smokers or non-smokers to risk disease progression' compared with nonsmokers (75.5%) or ex-smokers (68.7%). There were no changes in cigarettes smoked per day (mean  $\pm$  SD: 13.3  $\pm$  9.55 vs 13.4  $\pm$  9.69,  $p=0.414$ ), percentage of daily smokers (70.8% vs 71.1%,  $p=0.882$ ) and percentage of smokers with motivation to quit (intend to quit within the next 6 months, 9.4% vs 10.9%,  $p=0.148$ ) before and after the outbreak of COVID-19.

### **Conclusions:**

The survey found that fewer current smokers agreed that smoking is a risk-factor for COVID-19 compared with non-smokers or ex-smokers. Among current smokers, there were no changes in their cigarette consumption and motivation to quit before and after the outbreak of COVID-19. More efforts are needed to educate smokers about the health risks of smoking, as well as efforts to promote their motivation to quit.

### **Recommended Citation**

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