

The effect of pack warning labels on quitting and related thoughts and behaviours in a national cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers

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Abstract

Introduction: The high prevalence of smoking among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia (39%) contributes substantially to health inequalities. This study assesses the impact of warning labels on quitting and related thoughts and behaviours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers.

Methods: Participants were recruited from communities served by 34 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and communities in the Torres Strait, Australia, using quota sampling. A cohort of 642 daily/weekly smokers completed relevant questions at baseline (April 2012-October 2013) and follow up (August 2013-August 2014).

Results: We considered three baseline predictor variables: noticing warning labels, forgoing cigarettes due to warning labels ('forgoing') and perceiving labels to be effective. Forgoing increased significantly between surveys only for those first surveyed prior to the introduction of plain packs (19% vs. 34%), however there were no significant interactions between forgoing cigarettes and the introduction of new and enlarged graphic warning labels on plain packaging in any model. Forgoing cigarettes predicted attempting to quit (AOR: 1.45, 95% CI: 1.02-2.06) and, among those who did not want to quit at baseline, wanting to quit at follow-up (AOR: 3.19, 95% CI: 1.06-9.63). Among those less worried about future health effects, all three variables predicted being very worried at follow-up. Often noticing warning labels predicted correct responses to questions about health effects that had featured on warning labels (AOR: 1.84, 95% CI: 1.20-2.82) but not for those not featured.

Conclusions: Graphic warning labels appear to have a positive impact on the understanding, concerns and motivations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers and, through these, their quit attempts.

Implications: Graphic warning labels are likely to be effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers as they are for the broader Australian population.

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