

Prevalence and correlates of lifetime e-cigarette use among adolescents attending public schools in a low income community in the US

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Abstract

Introduction: The prevalence of e-cigarette use among US adolescents is increasing. However, there is limited research on the prevalence and correlates of e-cigarette use among adolescents in low income and under resourced communities. We report on their e-cigarette susceptibility and use behaviors, and perceived risks of harm and addiction.

Methods: Students in grades 7, 9, and 11 from a Title I school district in the northeastern US completed an online survey during a class period. Lifetime e-cigarette use and its correlates were tested in bivariate and logistic regression models.

Results: Most students were of Latino ethnicity (66%), and 36% identified as Black/African American. Overall, 55% of the full sample were considered 'susceptible' to e-cigarette use: 19% were lifetime e-cigarette users while 6% were lifetime smokers. Students in 11th grade were more likely (OR = 2.5) to have ever used e-cigarettes compared to students in 7th grade. Those that were more curious (OR = 11.8), intended to use e-cigarettes in the next 12 months (OR = 2.8), and would use the product if it was offered by a friend (OR = 2.4) had greater odds of lifetime e-cigarette use. By contrast, students who perceived at least moderate risks of health harm (OR = 0.44) were less likely to have used e-cigarettes.

Conclusions: Adolescents from marginalized communities are susceptible to and are using e-cigarettes. Prevention efforts targeting underserved areas may benefit from e-cigarette health education messages that reduce curiosity, interrupt social aspects of initiation, and emphasize health harms.

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