

The importance of the belief that "light" cigarettes are smoother in misperceptions of the harmfulness of "light" cigarettes in the Republic of Korea: A cohort study

Green, A., Fong, G.T., Borland, R., Quah, A.C.K., Seo, H.G., Kim, Y., & Elton-Marshall, T.

Abstract

BACKGROUND: A number of countries have banned misleading cigarette descriptors such as "light" and "low-tar" as called for by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. These laws, however, do not address the underlying cigarette design elements that contribute to misperceptions about harm. This is the first study to examine beliefs about "light" cigarettes among Korean smokers, and the first to identify factors related to cigarette design that are associated with the belief that "light" cigarettes are less harmful.

METHODS: We analysed data from Wave 3 of the ITC Korea Survey, a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,753 adult smokers, conducted October - December 2010. A multinomial logistic regression was used to examine which factors were associated with the belief that "light" cigarettes are less harmful than regular cigarettes.

RESULTS: One quarter (25.0 %) of smokers believed that "light" cigarettes are less harmful than regular cigarettes, 25.8 % believed that smokers of "light" brands take in less tar, and 15.5 % held both of these beliefs. By far the strongest predictor of the erroneous belief that "light" cigarettes are less harmful was the belief that "light" cigarettes are smoother on the throat and chest ($p < 0.001$, OR = 44.8, 95 % CI 23.6-84.9).

CONCLUSIONS: The strong association between the belief that "light" cigarettes are smoother on the throat and chest and the belief that "light" cigarettes are less harmful, which is consistent with previous research, provides further evidence of the need to not only ban "light" descriptors, but also prohibit cigarette design and packaging features that contribute to the perception of smoothness.

Recommended Citation

Green, A., Fong, G.T., Borland, R., Quah, A.C.K., Seo, H.G., Kim, Y., & Elton-Marshall, T. (2015). The importance of the belief that "light" cigarettes are smoother in misperceptions of the harmfulness of "light" cigarettes in the Republic of Korea: A cohort study. *BioMed Central Public Health*, 15(1), 1108-.

Link To PDF: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/15/1108>