

Mediational pathways of cigarette warning labels' impact on smoking cessation attempts in four countries: An application of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Objective: To test and develop, using structural equation modeling, a robust model of the mediational pathways through which health warning labels exert their influence on smokers' subsequent quitting behavior.

Method: Data come from the International Tobacco Control Four-Country Survey, a longitudinal cohort study conducted in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Waves 5-6 data (n = 4,988) were used to calibrate the hypothesized model of warning label impact on subsequent quit attempts via a set of policy-specific and general psychosocial mediators. The finalized model was validated using Waves 6-7 data (n = 5065).

Results: As hypothesized, warning label salience was positively associated with thoughts about risks of smoking stimulated by the warnings ($\beta = .58, p < .001$), which in turn were positively related to increased worry about negative outcomes of smoking ($\beta = .52, p < .001$); increased worry in turn predicted stronger intention to quit ($\beta = .39, p < .001$), which was a strong predictor of subsequent quit attempts ($\beta = .39, p < .001$). This calibrated model was successfully replicated using Waves 6-7 data.

Conclusion: Health warning labels seem to influence future quitting attempts primarily through their ability to stimulate thoughts about the risks of smoking, which in turn help to raise smoking-related health concerns, which lead to stronger intentions to quit, a known key predictor of future quit attempts for smokers. By making warning labels more salient and engaging, they should have a greater chance to change behavior.

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