

Does free or lower cost smoking cessation medication stimulate quitting? Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Netherlands and UK Surveys

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To investigate whether mentioning free or lower cost smoking cessation medication as a trigger for thinking about quitting is related to higher medication use, more quit attempts and quit success, and whether these associations are modified by education and income.

METHODS: Data were derived from the 2013 and 2014 surveys of the International Tobacco Control Netherlands (n=1164) and UK (n=768) cohort. Logistic regression analyses were used to assess associations between mentioning in 2013 that free/lower cost smoking cessation medication was a trigger for thinking about quitting smoking and the use of medication, quit attempts and smoking cessation in 2014.

RESULTS: 37.0% of smokers in the UK and 24.9% of smokers in the Netherlands mentioned free/lower cost medication as a trigger for thinking about quitting. Smokers who mentioned this trigger were more likely to have used cessation medication during a quit attempt both in the UK (OR=4.19, $p<0.001$) and in the Netherlands (OR=2.14, $p=0.033$). The association between mentioning free/lower cost medication as a trigger for thinking about quitting and actual quit attempts was significant in the UK (OR=1.45, $p=0.030$), but not in the Netherlands (OR=1.10, $p=0.587$). There was no significant association with quit success. Associations did not differ across income and education groups.

CONCLUSION: Free/lower cost smoking cessation medication may increase the use of cessation medication and stimulate quit attempts among smokers with low, moderate and high education and income.

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