

Effectiveness of Self-help Smoking Cessation Interventions for College Smokers: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Introduction

One-third of college students smoke at least occasionally.^{1,2} Although many students intend to quit smoking, few programs exist to support their efforts. In response, researchers working with Leave The Pack Behind (LTPB) – a comprehensive, multi-campus tobacco control initiative – developed a self help smoking cessation program tailored specifically to psychosocial attributes of young adult smokers.

Purpose: This study examined the effectiveness of the new program relative to a traditional self-help program and a quit kit package.

Methods

Interventions: Smoke|Quit (S|Q) is a new, 2-booklet, age-tailored, self-help resource. Canadian Cancer Society's (CCS) 2-booklet stage based program for adults is considered to be the 'gold standard' of self-help materials. The quit kit package contains a booklet on stress management, information about pharmacological aides, and novelty items.

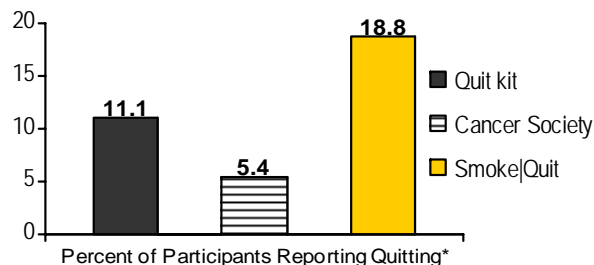
Participants: 483 students from six Ontario universities participated. All were self-reported smokers who voluntarily accessed LTPB's services, and gave consent to provide data for the study.

Procedures: As subjects entered the study, they randomly received one of the three interventions. All received a 1-month proactive telephone support call. Data were collected at baseline (using a questionnaire) and 3 months later (using a standardized telephone interview).

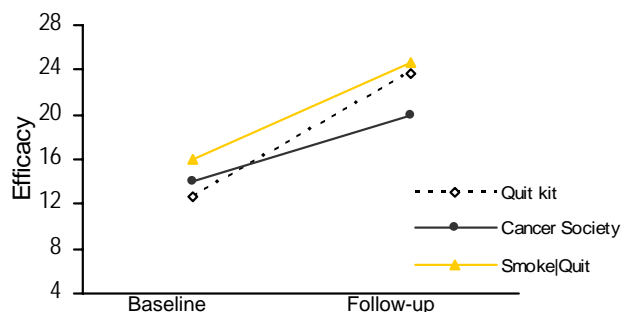
Results

Complete data sets were available from 216 participants (85 participants withdrew and 182 were not reached because the school year ended before the follow-up was scheduled to occur). The final sample was representative of the initial sample on all demographic and smoking-related variables.

Successful Quitters at 3-Month Follow-up



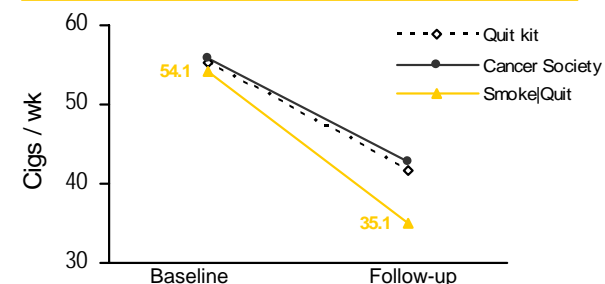
Smoke|Quit produced the highest proportion of quitters, $\chi^2(2, N=216)=6.3, p<.05$. Number of days smoke-free did not differ across treatments, $M=53.5$.



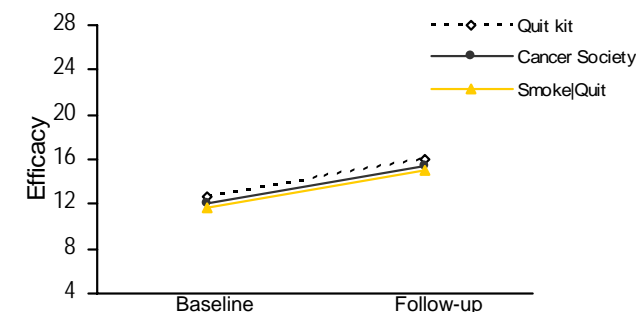
Four items answered on 7-point Likert scales assessed efficacy to resist temptation to smoke when: bored; stressed; partying; offered a cigarette.

Collapsed over treatments, quitters' self-efficacy to abstain from smoking increased from baseline ($M=14.65$) to follow-up ($M=23.70$), $t(22)=5.87, p<.01$.

Continuing Smokers at 3-Month Follow-up



Across treatments, weekly tobacco consumption decreased (main effect for time, $F(2, 186)=25.0, p<.001$).



Self-efficacy increased for continuing smokers (main effect for time, $F(2, 180)=46.1, p<.001$).

Conclusions & Recommendations

The new Smoke|Quit produced the greatest number of quitters, followed by the quit kit and the adult-oriented CCS booklet. Offering college smokers a self-help program that addresses their psychosocial characteristics and the contextual issues of their smoking may enhance successful quitting relative to traditional interventions aimed broadly at adults. Given the high prevalence of smoking in the post-secondary student population, and based on the success of Smoke|Quit in assisting university students to quit smoking, it is recommended that this program be widely disseminated on post-secondary campuses. Since many smokers are unwilling or unable to quit,³ incorporating harm reduction strategies to the Smoke|Quit program is encouraged.

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The name, LEAVE THE PACK BEHIND, is used with permission of WHO. LTPB is funded by the Government of Ontario and Health Canada. Smoke|Quit was produced with funding from Health Canada. Ontario Tobacco Research Unit and the Canadian Tobacco Control Research Initiative supported the study.

References: 1. Adlaf, E.M., Gliksman, L., Demers, A., & Newton-Taylor, B. (2003). Cigarette use among Canadian undergraduates. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 94*, 22-24. 2. Wechsler, H., Rigotti, N., Gledhill-Hoyt, J., & Lee, H. (1998). Increased level of cigarette use among college students: A cause for national concern. *JAMA, 280*, 1673-1680. 3. Shields, P.G. (2002). Tobacco smoking, harm reduction, and biomarkers. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute, 2*, 1435-1444.