

Characteristics associated with self-identification as a regular smoker and desire to quit among college students who smoke cigarettes

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Tobacco use among college students increased substantially during the 1990s. Better understanding of college smokers is warranted to develop interventions specific to the needs of this population. We examined sociodemographic and tobacco-use characteristics associated with self-identification as a regular smoker and intentions to quit smoking among college students who smoke cigarettes. We conducted logistic regression analysis on baseline survey data from the Campus Health Action on Tobacco study, a 4-year group-randomized trial at 30 four-year colleges in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Students who self-identified as a regular smoker smoked more cigarettes before starting college, smoked a greater number of cigarettes the prior 30 days, smoked more cigarettes per day, and were more likely to smoke within 30 min of waking up, compared with students who were current smokers but did not consider themselves regular smokers. Females, older students, and those who had decreased the amount they smoked since coming to college were more likely to want to quit "very much." Females and students in early college years were more likely to be planning to quit before graduation, as were students who had decreased the amount they smoked since coming to college. Interventions should target students who are in their early college years, given that habits prior to college, changes in smoking habits while in college, and year in college are associated with students' self-identification as a regular smoker, desire to quit smoking, or plan to quit smoking while in college.

Introduction

Smoking prevalence within the general U.S. population decreased slightly during the 1990s (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2002); however, the incidence of first-time cigarette use among persons aged 12–25 years increased during this period (CDC, 1998). Among college students, the Harvard College Alcohol Study found an increase in smoking prevalence (measured as having used cigarettes within the past 30 days) at colleges across the United States from 22% in 1993 to 29% in 1997 (Wechsler, Rigotti, Gledhill-Hoyt, & Lee, 1998)

and 1999 (Rigotti, Lee, & Wechsler, 2000). Since then, 30-day prevalence rates among college students have fallen to 24.3% among full-time college students, a figure that remains alarmingly high (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2004).

Studies also suggest that college is a time of smoking transition. In a 4-year longitudinal study of college students, Wetter et al. (2004) found that among baseline occasional smokers (defined as smoking less frequently than daily), 14% became daily smokers and 51% quit smoking. A total of 12% of baseline nonsmokers began smoking during their college years and 13% of daily smokers quit (Wetter et al., 2004). Researchers have examined demographic factors, lifestyle habits, and psychological traits associated with smoking in this population. Being White (CDC, 1997; Moskal, Dziuban, & West, 1999; Rigotti et al., 2000); binge drinking (Emmons, Wechsler, Dowdall, & Abraham, 1998; Jones, Oeltmann, Wilson, Brener, & Hill, 2001; Rigotti et

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