



Policy and Practice Brief

Our most recent two papers using the follow-up surveys are about the impact of *social networks* on quitting and the individual predictors and reasons for *starting and sustaining* quit attempts.

Volume 4, Issue 1
March 2019

Social networks

Health staff could consider encouraging smokers to draw on their few non-smoking friends and family members as role models to increase their confidence that they will successfully quit.

We found that most of the close friends and family members of smokers also smoked. As in other settings, having more family and friends who smoke is an obstacle to quitting. But smokers also benefit from considerable support and encouragement to quit from their family and friends.

There is growing research evidence that health behaviours, such as smoking and quitting, spread through social networks. However, literature reviews have not been able to find conclusive evidence of peer-support, partner-support or family-based smoking cessation programs.



Source: CAAMA

Predictors of *starting and sustaining* quit attempts

Health staff could focus more on increasing smokers' confidence that they can successfully quit. This belief that quitting will not be too hard predicts whether smokers will be able to stay quit once they have started a quit attempt.

Health staff need to rethink current messages that just encourage smokers to keep making quit attempts by increasing smokers' motivation to quit.

Smokers are not giving up trying after unsuccessful attempts, but remain motivated to try again. But this motivation to quit and having made more quit attempts in the past does not predict eventual success in staying quit.

We found that different factors predict starting and sustaining quit attempts among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers. This builds on our earlier paper examining the association between social determinants and quitting (see Policy and Practice Brief Volume 2, Issue 1 January 2017).

Health concerns, price and setting an example to children were the most common reasons given by smokers and ex-smokers for quitting. This perceived motivation to quit to set an example for children is more common than in other settings, and has been and can be used in local and national media campaigns.

For more information

- Thomas DP, Davey M, van der Sterren, A, Lyons L, Hunt JM, Bennet PT. Social networks and quitting in a national cohort of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers. *Drug Alc Rev* 2019;38:82-91. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/dar.12891>
- Thomas DP, Lyons L, Borland R. Predictors and reasons for quitting smoking and sustaining abstinence in national sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers. *Drug Alc Rev* 2019;38:244-253. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dar.12917>

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Talking About the Smokes is a national research project led by a partnership between Menzies School of Health Research, NACCHO and all its Affiliates, University of Melbourne, and Cancer Council Victoria, together with 34 ACCHSs and the Torres Shire Council. It is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health

Key findings

We analysed data from the 759 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who reported smoking at least weekly in the baseline survey (April 2012 – October 2013) who completed a follow-up survey a year later (August 2013 – August 2014).

Social networks

- At baseline, 41% of smokers reported that all of their five closest family or friends smoked, and 58% reported other adults in their household smoked.
- 62% reported that family or friends had provided support or encouragement to quit.
- Fewer smokers with other adult smokers in their household (compared with those with no smokers in their household) at baseline made a quit attempt between surveys (46% vs 58%).
- Fewer smokers who had made an attempt between surveys stayed quit for at least one month if all of their five closest friends and family smoked (compared to those who said at least one of their five closest friends and family smoked) (28% vs 38%).

Predictors of quit attempts

- Having made more quit attempts, more recent quit attempts in the past, several indicators of motivation to quit, having been encouraged to quit by a health professional and having noticed tobacco advertising were associated with making a quit attempt between surveys.
- In contrast, having made longer quit attempts in the past, non-daily smoking and perceiving that quitting will not be very hard were associated with sustaining a quit attempt for a month or more between surveys. But neither having made more quit attempts in the past nor dependence was associated with sustaining abstinence.