

Smokers' perceptions of sources of advice about quitting: Findings from the Australian arm of the ITC 4-Country Survey

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Abstract

Smokers are exposed to advice about quitting from numerous sources. Within the 2013 ITC 4-Country Survey, 1211 Australian smokers or recent ex-smokers rated the perceived importance of eight sources of advice, categorized into evidence-based, non evidence-based, personal experience and vicarious experience (two items each), and also rated their intention to quit, nicotine dependence, use of quit medication, health concerns and harm beliefs. The eight items were all positively correlated. Respondents who placed greater importance on their experiences (either personal or vicarious) were more likely to agree that the evidence for smoking-related harm is exaggerated, and although not more likely to intend to quit overall, these responses were most strongly related to quit intention. Notably, of those responding that all sources were 'not at all important' (or don't know), only 3.2% reported any interest in quitting in the next 6 months (compared to 36.0% among those who endorsed any), 12.8% were often concerned about smoking's effect on their health (compared with 60.4%), and 73.7% agreed that 'smoking is no more risky than other things' (compared with 34.5%). There was no evidence that rejecting evidence-based sources (medical or governmental) in favour of other sources was associated with lower quit intentions or behaviour.

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