

Study finds racial disparities in smoking cessation treatment

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A new study from the American Cancer Society finds black and Hispanic smokers are less likely than whites to receive and use smoking cessation advice and aids. The study, published in the May issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, also finds men and those without a usual source of medical care were less likely to be screened for tobacco use and receive advice to quit.

Members of several racial and ethnic minority populations bear a disproportionate share of the adverse health consequences of tobacco use. There is strong evidence that interventions, ranging from a health care worker's brief advice to quit to extensive counseling and the use of pharmaceutical and behavioral adjuncts, can considerably improve cessation rates in smokers. Smoking is associated with socioeconomic disadvantage and is an important contributor to inequalities in health.

For their study, American Cancer Society researchers led by Vilma Cokkinides, Ph.D., analyzed survey results from 4756 smokers (aged 18 and older) who visited a healthcare provider within the past year. All were participants in the 2005 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). The analysis found that compared to white smokers, black and Hispanic smokers were less likely to have been asked about tobacco use (85 percent in whites versus 77 percent in blacks and 72 percent in Hispanics); less likely to have been advised to quit (63 percent in whites versus 55 percent in blacks and 48 percent in Hispanics); and less likely to have used tobacco-cessation aids during the past year in a quit attempt (38 percent in whites versus 24 percent in blacks and 21 percent in

Hispanics). These racial/ethnic differences in the use of smoking cessation remained significant even after controlling for various other factors (for example, health insurance coverage, or socio-economics status of smokers).

“The good news is the number of smokers who are getting advice to quit is rising, from 53 percent in 2000 to 61 percent in 2005, with increases across racial and ethnic groups,” said Otis W. Brawley, M.D., chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society. “The bad news is the gap between races still exists. We need to ensure there is broad and consistent application of proven tobacco cessation interventions if we are to sustain the overall progress documented in this study.”

Source: American Cancer Society

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