

Smoking prevention campaign saving billions in smoking-related care

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Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the American Legacy Foundation have estimated that truth®, the nations' largest youth smoking prevention campaign, saved \$1.9 billion or more in health care costs associated with tobacco use. The results were published February 12 online by the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"The cost effectiveness of the truth® campaign has major tobacco policy implications," said lead author, David Holtgrave, PhD, director of the Bloomberg School's Institute for Global Tobacco Control and Chair of the Department of Health, Behavior and Society. "The campaign was previously shown to lead to far fewer youth initiating smoking. In the current paper, we now estimate that the campaign will avert future health care costs of roughly \$1.9 billion and perhaps more, because youth who avoid smoking will avoid the negative health consequences of smoking. Even under our most pessimistic analysis, the cost per quality adjusted life year saved by the campaign is substantially below the cost of other major prevention interventions and therefore its expansion would be an excellent public health investment."

Using standard methods of cost and cost-utility analysis, Holtgrave and colleagues compared the costs of the truth® campaign to the absence of the campaign. The American Legacy Foundation spent \$324 million to implement and evaluate the truth® campaign. The authors have compared the cost of the program to its health care savings; they found that both base and optimistic case results indicate cost savings over and

above the campaign's initial costs. Even the most pessimistic case analyzed indicated that the intervention is cost effective to society.

Launched in 2000 by the American Legacy Foundation, the truth® campaign aims to capitalize on the desire of young people between the ages of 12 to 17 to be rebellious and independent.

"Studies like this further validate the evolving approach to youth public education we have applied since the campaign first launched in 2000," said co-author, Cheryl G. Heaton, DrPH, president and CEO of the American Legacy Foundation. "It is indeed gratifying to know that a growing body of research continues to prove that, even over time, the campaign remains remarkably relevant to teens' lives and effective in promoting healthy, educated choices when it comes to tobacco use."

"Cost-Utility Analysis of the National truth® Campaign to Prevent Youth Smoking" was written by David R. Holtgrave, Katherine A. Wunderink, Donna M. Vallone and Cheryl G. Heaton.

Source: Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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