

Helping Latinos kick the habit

October 29 2010, By Emily Paulsen

Latinos who live the United States are more likely to quit smoking when they take part in an intervention program, finds a systematic review of studies conducted by Monica Webb Hooper, Ph.D., and colleagues at the University of Miami.

According to U.S. Census data, Latinos are the largest, fastest growing [minority population](#) in the country. Webb said that Latinos tend to smoke at rates lower than whites and African-Americans; however, the longer Latinos remain in this country, the greater the likelihood of picking up the habit. Rates of smoking among many Latino immigrant communities here are higher than in their home countries.

Webb Hooper's study appears online and in the November/December 2010 issue of the *American Journal of Health Promotion*.

In her review of scientific literature, Webb Hooper looked for randomized controlled trials of [smoking cessation](#) interventions specifically targeting Latinos or Hispanics living in the [United States](#). She analyzed five studies, each looking at between 93 and 313 participants.

One study looked at an intervention using nicotine replacement therapy. The other four studies focused on providing "culturally specific" interventions, such as self-help materials or telephone, individual or group counseling delivered in the participants' native language.

"We found evidence that the odds of quitting were significantly greater

for those who received the intervention than for those in the control groups,” Webb said.

However, because there were so few studies (one of each type), it was not clear which type of intervention was most effective, especially in the long term. “There was a trend suggesting that nicotine replacement might be differentially beneficial because that study had larger effects than the others,” she said. This finding appears to contradict previous research, which she said had suggested that “Hispanics may be less likely to accept medication or anything that is perceived as medication.”

The paucity of studies that qualified for the review concerns Webb. “There is promise for providing a variety of tobacco cessation programs among Hispanics, but we definitely have significant amounts of work to be done to properly address the needs of this community.”

Paula Cupertino, Ph.D., an assistant professor of preventive medicine at the University of Kansas Medical Center, agreed that there is a pressing need to develop effective smoking cessation interventions for Latino smokers. Language, cultural and financial issues can be barriers to accessing the health care system. Even if Latino smokers want to quit, they might not be aware of resources available to help them do that.

According to Cupertino, smoking-related diseases are already the number one cause of death in Latino-Americans (which is the case for whites and African-Americans as well). Cancer rates are currently lower among Latinos, but that will probably change in coming years, Cupertino said.

“Today Latinos coming into this country tend to be younger than the rest of the population,” Cupertino said. “However, as this population grows older, we project we’ll see a greater incidence of cancer.” She said that predictions indicate cancer rates among Latinos will rise 147 percent by

2030 and that smoking cessation programs could play an important role in turning this trend around.

More information: Webb MS, Rodriguez-Esquivel D, Baker EA. Smoking cessations interventions among Hispanics in the United States: a systematic review and mini meta-analysis. *Am J Health Promo* 25(2), 2010.

Provided by Health Behavior News Service

Citation: Helping Latinos kick the habit (2010, October 29) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-10-latinos-habit.html>

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