

Study examines prevalence of smoking among health care professionals

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A survey of health care professionals finds that in 2010-2011, current smoking among this group, except for licensed practical nurses, was lower than the general population, and that the majority had never smoked, according to a study in the January 8 issue of *JAMA*.

Smoking by [health care](#) professionals is a barrier to tobacco interventions with patients. From 2003 to 2006-2007, smoking prevalences among health care professionals demonstrated no significant declines, according to background information in the article.

Linda Sarna, Ph.D., R.N., of the University of California, Los Angeles, and colleagues conducted a study to assess changes in [smoking status](#) among health care professionals. The researchers obtained publicly available data from self-respondents to the Tobacco Use Supplement to the Current Population Survey to compare smoking prevalences among health care professionals from 2003 to 2010-2011. Occupations included physicians, [registered nurses](#), licensed practical nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists and dental hygienists. Smoking status was defined as never smokers, former smokers, and current smokers.

The 2010-2011 survey data from 2,975 health care professionals indicated that approximately 8 percent were current smokers, ranging from 2 percent among physicians to 25 percent among licensed practical nurses (the rate of current smoking among the general population is 16 percent). There was a decline in prevalence of current smoking among these health care professionals from 2003 to 2010-2011, but the only

group with a significant decline in prevalence of current smoking from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 and from 2003 to 2010-2011 was registered nurses (from 11 percent to 7 percent; a 36 percent decline).

The only significant changes in proportions of those who quit by profession from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011 were among registered nurses (a 13 percent increase), and among licensed practical nurses (a 30 percent decrease).

"Recent declines in smoking among [health care professionals](#) may reflect the impact of national tobacco control policies and efforts focused on reducing smoking among registered nurses. After little change in prevalence from 2003 to 2006-2007, the drop in smoking among registered nurses was more than twice that of the 13 percent decrease in the population, and the proportion who have quit was higher than the [general population](#) estimate (53.62 percent). Continued [smoking](#) and diminished quitting among licensed practical nurses remains a serious concern," the authors write.

More information: [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2013.284871](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.284871)

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