

# Novel approach to helping long-term smokers

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A novel program to identify and support long-term smokers with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is being trialled by Australian researchers.

COPD, a [chronic lung condition](#), is a major public health concern affecting up to 50 per cent of smokers. In its early stages many will be unaware they have the disease. However, people who develop significant COPD will eventually get to a stage where they have difficulty showering, making a cup of tea, and some may end up needing to rely on home oxygen.

RADICALS ('Review of Airway Dysfunction and Interdisciplinary Community-based care in Adult Long-term Smokers') is a Monash University-led study examining a new approach to COPD. RADICALS' tests a program promoting early diagnosis, home-based exercise, quit-smoking support, and medication management.

Dr Johnson George from the Centre for Medicine Use and Safety at Monash University, said seeking appropriate management for the disease early was important to slow down deterioration.

"One in five patients who visits a general practice is a smoker, however at the moment COPD is often not being diagnosed or managed adequately at the primary care level," Dr George said.

"Most people are not diagnosed with COPD until they have lost almost 50 per cent of their lung function. Even those who have been diagnosed may not be receiving the best treatment. Currently, less than two per cent of Australians with COPD are undertaking pulmonary rehabilitation."

Dr George said the RADICALS program would use an inter-disciplinary approach to help increase the quality of life for those with COPD. This project combines the expertise of different health professionals such as GPs, pharmacists, nurses and physiotherapists so that patients receive tailored smoking cessation support, home-based rehabilitation, and help with their medication.

The RADICALS program will help smokers quit smoking, and aid in the [early diagnosis](#) of COPD and its appropriate management, thereby reducing healthcare costs and improving people's quality of life.

"If we can demonstrate the value of this program, it could be implemented in primary care settings across Australia," Dr George said.

Provided by Monash University

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