

Using the power of song to resist smoking

March 9 2016, by Sandra Hutchinson



QUT researcher Kristi Greig is using the power of song to help young women quit smoking.

Listening to a song could hold the key to helping smokers resist the temptation, according to QUT psychology researcher Kristi Greig, who is embarking on a study to convey a health message through music and lyrics.

Ms Greig, from QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation (IHBI), will combine her musical talent with research to develop and compose a full length song aimed at influencing young female smokers to kick the habit.

"Music is often only an accompaniment to images and words in health advertisements but there is evidence that sung lyrics are more meaningful and are recognised more accurately than the same lyrics

presented as spoken word," Ms Greig said.

"We also know that music is a distinctive and powerful mode of communication and has the ability to influence thoughts and behaviours, as well as evoke intense emotions.

"What my study will do is use theory to pinpoint what type of music and lyrics are most likely to induce [positive emotions](#) and behaviours and influence [young women](#) to resist smoking.

"I will then go into the studio and compose both the words and music and produce a full-length song."

But Ms Greig said the first step was to better understand how young women react and feel about music and she has launched a short online survey aimed at young female smokers and ex-smokers aged 18-34.

"The [online survey](#) is really about discovering what music young women like, don't like and how different music makes them think and feel," she said.

"Research has shown that music can influence positive social changes in behaviour, for instance classical [music](#) played in Tube stations in London was found to deter young people from loitering and reduced violence by one third."

She said for decades a range of communication strategies to encourage people to stop smoking had been adopted, but there was a need for a fresh approach when looking at new interventions.

"A criticism of health campaigns to change behaviour is that they lack focus on an individual's emotions and rely on people to process information rationally.

"Smoking campaigns that seek to encourage people to stop have tended to and continue to focus on warning messages and graphic imagery and when over exposed may result in desensitisation.

"We also know that the level of an advertisement's emotional intensity is a significant predictor of advertising recall and is associated with reduced [smoking behaviour](#).

"If we can use song to communicate and induce powerful emotions and activate pleasure centres in the brain, we may hold the key to effecting behavioural change in areas such as smoking."

More information: Women current and ex-smokers, aged 18-34 years, are invited to take part in this study at www.carrsq.qut.edu.au/music

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

Citation: Using the power of song to resist smoking (2016, March 9) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-03-power-song-resist.html>

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