

Study reveals success of text messaging in helping smokers quit

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A new study from The Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine found that smokers who received a text messaging intervention were more likely to abstain from smoking relative to controls. The paper is published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* mHealth and uHealth.

"Tobacco use is one of the leading preventable global health problems, and text messaging has the promise to reach a wider audience with minimal costs and fewer resources," said Lori Scott-Sheldon, Ph.D., a senior research scientist in The Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine and an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Brown University.

Text messaging ([short message service](#), SMS) interventions provide health education, reminders and support using short written messages. SMS interventions can be adapted to fit an individual's health needs in his or her natural environment. The messages of support can be as simple as "You can do it!" or "Be strong."

Using meta-analysis—a statistical technique for combining the findings from independent studies—the researchers conducted the most extensive systematic review of the literature to date. This included 20 manuscripts with 22 text messaging interventions for smoking cessation from 10 countries.

"The evidence provides unequivocal support for the efficacy of text

messaging interventions to reduce smoking behavior, but more research is needed to understand for whom they work, under what conditions, and why," said Scott-Sheldon.

Added co-author Beth Bock, Ph.D., a senior research scientist in The Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine and a professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Brown University, "Text messaging enjoys near-market saturation and is a widely preferred method of communication with deep penetration across diverse groups. Wide availability of an attractive and effective [smoking cessation](#) program can exert a powerful, sustained impact on public health."

Provided by Lifespan

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