How to quit smoking online

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There are any number of support networks online aimed at those with problems they wish to solve. One such problem is the need to quite smoking. Research published in the *International Journal of Telemedicine and Clinical Practices*, has looked at how useful online health communities are in this effort. The study found that if there is a

high level of perceived usefulness, then users will be more inclined to support each other in their efforts to give up their habit.

Chenglong Li of the University of Turku in Turku, Finland, looked at perceived usefulness and how this affects satisfaction with the online community and thence the knowledge sharing and recommendation behavior of users. Given just how ubiquitous the internet now is, such online communities could have great potential in health and other interventions. Earlier research had suggested that the success of such communities hinged on whether or not individuals stayed with the program, as it were, after they had quit smoking but left the community.

Li uses social capital theory to examine this notion further. He finds that success in the community influences a user's knowledge sharing and their recommendation of the community to others after they themselves have quit, which affects the overall success of the community in helping everyone with their goal.

He adds that the service provider making the online community available has a positive role to play. Providers should encourage users to participate in online activities often. This should facilitate the development of shared language and commitment, he suggests. Moreover, providers might define missions and goals more clearly to strengthen the common vision among users. Such actions would boost the perceived usefulness of the community, help users in their struggle with addiction and encourage the spread of the community to other smokers.

Ultimately, widespread smoking cessation is the aim and such communities would at that point become redundant. However, as we know smoking addiction is a powerful force and smokers hoping to quit are likely to be around for many years to come and so such communities will have a role to play for the foreseeable future.

More information: Chenglong Li, Comprehending the roles of perceived usefulness and satisfaction in smoking cessation online health communities: a social capital perspective, *International Journal of Telemedicine and Clinical Practices* (2022). DOI: 10.1504/IJTMCP.2022.123146

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