A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MARKETING E-CIGARETTES TO ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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INTRODUCTION

Electronic cigarette use is increasing in adolescents and young adults, with 3% of middle school students, 10% of high school students, and 5% of college students reporting lifetime use (CDC, 2011; Sutfin, 2013).

The appeal of e-cigarettes may be due to the marketing of these products that is directed toward youth and young adults.

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may decide to make guidelines to reduce the appeal of electronic cigarettes in youth: therefore it is important to understand youth perceptions of marketing practices.

AIM

The aim of this study is to examine the sources and themes of electronic cigarette marketing that are perceived among adolescents and young adult smokers and non-smokers.

METHODS

18 focus groups in 2 colleges (n = 59 students), 2 high schools (n = 52 students) and 2 middle schools (n = 16 students) in New Haven County, CT.

College and high school groups were stratified by gender and cigarette smoking status and middle school groups by gender only.

A standard focus group guide was used to ask participants about their knowledge and perceptions of electronic cigarettes, including sources of advertising and appeal.

DATA ANALYSIS

Group discussions were recorded, transcribed, and examined using framework analysis technique by coding for a priori concepts and emergent themes.

Preliminary data on sources of advertising and advertising themes is presented as data analysis is ongoing.

SOURCES OF E-CIGARETTE ADVERTISING

Television
Gas Stations
Convenience Stores
Internet (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)
Magazines
Mall
Peers and Siblings

2 MOST COMMON ADVERTISING THEMES IDENTIFIED

E-cigarettes are healthier than cigarettes.
Smokers were more likely than non-smokers to presume that the advertisements were promoting a healthier alternative to smoking.

E-cigarettes are more convenient than cigarettes

ADVERTISING APPEAL

Non-smokers commented about the ads highlighting the design of the product, describing it as “cool”, “sleek”, and “colorful”.

“IT is like an iPhone. Everybody wants an iPhone because it is new.”
- High School Female Nonsmoker

Males were more likely than females to comment on the ads being pleasant and appealing.

“The ad is really appealing, like for Blu, the design is real sleek. Everything looks nice and you’re like ‘oh, what is this?’”
- College Male Smoker

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

All age groups report the internet as a common source of e-cigarette advertising.

College students were more likely than other participants to report magazines as a common source of advertising.

All age groups mentioned the mall as a popular source of advertising, although male smokers were least likely to comment on the mall.

Younger students were more likely than older students to acknowledge television as a source of advertising.

Smokers of all ages acknowledged peers and siblings as alternate sources of information about e-cigarettes.

CONCLUSIONS

Adolescents and young adults are receiving information about e-cigarettes from various types of media, as well as from peers and siblings.

Common themes perceived by all students are that e-cigarettes are healthier and more convenient than cigarettes.

Bright colors, flavors, and the newness make e-cigarettes appealing.

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