INTRODUCTION

• Cigarette smoking rates among young adults and adolescents have decreased in the past decade; however, novel tobacco products such as hookah have appeared to gain popularity.

• Hookah is a water pipe for smoking flavored tobacco and the smoke from the tobacco is passed through a container of water and then smoked.

• Example of hookahs

Hookah Use Rates:

• Hookah use among young adults (ages 18-24) increased by more than 40% from 2005 to 2008 (Smith et al., 2011) and hookah use is reported by 41% of young adults (Primack et al., 2009).

• Hookah use among adolescents is about 10-11% (Barnett et al., 2009; Primack et al., 2009).

Goal of the Current Study:

• Given the increase in popularity, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the risks and harms of hookah use among adolescents and young adults need to be examined.

• Development of a better understanding of these issues could lead to targeted prevention programs.

• We used qualitative focus groups to explore perceptions related to hookah use, which may be useful in informing the regulation of this and new tobacco products.

METHODS

• We conducted 8 qualitative focus groups (4-8 participants each) with high school and college students stratified by tobacco-use status and gender to assess:
  - Knowledge of hookah
  - Motivation to use hookah
  - Comparative perceptions to cigarettes
  - Perceptions of risk of hookah use.

Procedure

• High school students were recruited during lunch room recruitment sessions and college students were recruited through handouts and flyers in the school.

• Participants were randomly selected from a sample of students who signed up to participate.

• Tobacco users were defined as those who reported regular use of tobacco products in the past month.

• Focus groups with high school students were conducted after school and college students were conducted during evening times or lunch times.

• Participants were provided with refreshments prior to focus groups and received gift cards worth $25-$50 for their participation

Data Analysis

• Focus groups were transcribed and two independent raters reviewed the transcripts and coded them using thematic analysis.

RESULTS

Focus group findings regarding perceptions on hookah use. The themes did not differ between high school and college students.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of hookah</td>
<td>• All aware of the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Viewed as positive “cool”, “trendy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appealing because of various flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Easily accessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication channel</td>
<td>• Social media such as Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local hookah bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hookah use</td>
<td>• Smokers: most have tried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-smokers: most either tried it or were willing to try in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of health risk</td>
<td>• Some found hookah to be a healthier alternative to cigarette smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Others found the health risks to be equivalent to cigarette smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All reported concerns of hygiene and the spread of diseases from sharing the mouth piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of addictiveness</td>
<td>• Some smokers felt that hookah use was less habit forming than cigarette smoking because of the effort needed to prepare to use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS

• Although existing data indicate that hookah use rates among young adults are higher than those of adolescents’, focus group findings did not show differences in perceptions surrounding use, health risks, accessibility between the age groups.

• Both smokers and non-smokers shared similarly positive views on hookah use.

• Smokers found hookah to be generally safer than cigarettes but also less habit forming.

IMPLICATIONS

• These positive perceptions of hookah use among adolescents and young adults are concerning from tobacco prevention perspectives.

• The findings indicate the need to identify effective communication methods to relay health risks of hookah use to adolescent and young adult populations.

REFERENCES


