Understanding How to Develop a Quit Smoking Program

Tobacco use and quitting smoking

American Indians have the highest smoking rates of any racial/ethnic group in the US. The smoking rate among Native people is almost twice as high as White Americans (40.8% vs. 23.6%). In addition, American Indian smokers are less likely to successfully quit smoking. Recreational cigarette use has become one of the most pressing health issues for Native people. However, traditional and ceremonial use of tobacco continues to play a role in many communities. We conducted this research to help understand the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to the differences in recreational and traditional use of tobacco, as well as how to create a quit smoking program that would respect the sacred use of tobacco.

What did we study and how did we do it?

We conducted group discussions with 41 Native adult smokers in Kansas. The participants were aged 21-67 and the majority of them (63%) were female. We asked questions about knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to recreational and traditional use of tobacco, as well as about possible quit smoking programs, including the Second Wind program from Oklahoma.

We identified key themes in what people said in three topic areas, including: traditional tobacco use, quitting and quit attempts, and creating a culturally appropriate quit smoking program.

What we want to share with you!

Our findings suggest that the best support tools for Native smokers to quit are family and health concerns. The largest barriers were identified as friends, social situations, and stressors. Participants felt that a quit smoking program should address the community, social, and ecologic factors that influence cigarette smoking. They recommended that family and community-based support systems need to be enhanced and that a program must respect sacred tobacco, not ban the use of all tobacco. Our participants confirmed what we had suspected, that Native people have unique issues concerning tobacco use and could benefit from a culturally appropriate quit smoking program that respects traditional tobacco. Our participants gave us many possible ways to create such a program.

What’s next?

What we learned from these group discussion participants later went on to develop our culturally appropriate quit smoking program, All Nations Breath of Life.
