

Recruitment of Young Adult Smokers into a Province-wide, Campus-based Quit and Win Contest

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Purpose

Success of smoking cessation programs relies on effective recruitment of the target population. Young adults are difficult to recruit into health programs. This study examines the effectiveness of six recruitment approaches for a province-wide, campus-based Quit and Win contest.

The purpose of this study was to determine:

- i. What proportions of contestants learned about the contest from traditional print media, traditional electronic media, word of mouth, referral from a peer health educator or clinician, direct e-mail, and social media
- ii. Which recruitment approach triggered contestants to enroll in the contest
- iii. Whether there is a relationship between contestant characteristics and the recruitment approach that triggers them to enroll

Methods

In 2011, Leave The Pack Behind, a provincially-funded tobacco control initiative, hosted the *wouldrather...* smoking cessation contest at 42 Ontario post-secondary institutions. Each institution promoted the contest using whatever combination of recruitment approaches was available on their campus. Contest registration occurred from December 1, 2010 until January 23, 2011. During this time, 1,535 smokers (1.1% of the estimated 144,732 smokers on the campuses) registered in the contest.

All contestants who enrolled via online registration ($N = 937$) were invited to complete an online questionnaire assessing demographics, smoking behaviors, how they learned of the contest, and what triggered them to enroll. Of the eligible online registrants, 402 (43%) joined the study.

Results

- ❖ Of the contestants who agreed to be in the study, 356 met inclusion criteria for age (<30 years).
- ❖ Demographic characteristics:
 - Age, $M = 21.5$ years ($SD = 2.8$)

- 55% were female
- 41% were college students
- ❖ Smoking behaviours:
 - 72% were daily smokers; 28% were less-than-daily smokers
 - Age of smoking initiation, $M = 15.1$ years ($SD = 3.1$)
- ❖ Table 1 shows the proportion of contestants who learned about the contest and were triggered to enroll in the contest by the recruitment approaches.
- ❖ Chi-square analyses revealed females [$\chi^2(5, N = 356) = 12.9, p = .02$] and college students [$\chi^2(5, N = 356) = 31.8, p < .001$] *most often* identified direct e-mail as the approach that triggered them to enroll.

Discussion

- ❖ Traditional print mass-media continues to have a broad reach³, yet in this study it did not produce the most effective enrolment. Direct e-mail and in-person recruitment by a peer health educator or a referral from a clinician were most successful in triggering young adults to enroll in the contest.
- ❖ Given the simplicity and ease of clicking on a link in an e-mail, it is easy to see why direct e-mail would be an effective recruitment strategy for the young adult population. The high response suggests that the recruitment e-mail was not considered spam and that this free recruitment approach was effective.
- ❖ Social media did not reach or trigger enrollment as expected given young adults' widespread use of social media. It is possible that social media may be used by young adults strictly for social activities⁴ or that social media platforms were not utilized in a way that appealed to young adults. This is a relatively new area that requires further research.
- ❖ Overall, increasing recruitment into smoking cessation interventions has the potential to increase a program's population impact.^{3,5} As Leave The Pack Behind continues to utilize effective recruitment approaches for its *wouldrather...* smoking cessation contest, it will be possible for a greater number of young adult smokers to quit or reduce their smoking.

Significance

Despite the dawn of social media, traditional print mass-media remains a useful way to reach and recruit young adult smokers. Optimally, direct email should be used to most effectively trigger enrolment (especially among women and college students) in Quit and Win contests.

Table 1**Proportions of Contestants who Learned about the Contest and were Triggered to Enroll in the Contest by Recruitment Approach (N = 356)**

Recruitment Approach	Learned about the Contest from this Approach ^a		Were Triggered to Enroll by this Approach ^b		Among those Reached by this Approach, Proportion Triggered to Enroll	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Print mass-media (e.g., poster)	199	55.9	110	30.9	110/199	55.3
Word-of-mouth	119	33.4	61	17.1	61/119	51.3
Direct e-mail	107	30.1	82	23.0	82/107	76.6
Electronic mass-media (e.g., closed circuit TV)	105	29.5	42	11.8	42/105	40.0
Peer educator or clinician referral	74	20.8	50	14.0	50/74	67.6
Social media (e.g., Facebook)	30	8.4	11	3.1	11/30	36.7

^a check all of the ways you hear about this year's contest; therefore, values sum to >100%.

^b Check the one thing that got you to sign up for the contest.

References

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