



# EVALUATION NEWS

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 4

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## WHAT YOUNG MEN ON THE STREET SAY ABOUT SMOKING CESSATION



Welcome to the last issue of our four-part series examining how well Ontario's smoking cessation services are serving the needs of young male smokers aged 19-29. This issue focuses on findings from our interviews on the street with young male smokers in Ontario. We thank all smokers who generously agreed to be interviewed; this study would not have been possible without their valuable input.

**Erratum:** Please note a change in the Longitudinal Analysis section of Volume 2 Issue 3 which should read: *Among those who intended to quit within six months, there was a larger reduction in the number of cigarettes smoked per day (CPD) for young male smokers compared to older males (3 fewer cigarettes compared to 30-49 year olds males; 7 fewer cigarettes compared to 50-69 year old males,  $p < 0.05$ ).*

### OUR STUDY

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is currently examining how well the current smoking cessation services are serving the needs of young male smokers aged 19-29. Preliminary findings are presented in a series of newsletters. Past issues include:

- Reach of the existing services;
- Results of interviews with key informants;
- Results of a random digit dialing survey with Ontarian smokers

All newsletters are available from the OTRU website at [http://www.otru.org/program\\_evaluation.html](http://www.otru.org/program_evaluation.html)

In this issue we present the results of the interviews with 100 smokers aged 19-29.

### THE INTERVIEW

#### The Street Intercept Interview Sample and Methods

During August and September 2008, OTRU outreach workers traveled throughout Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie and Hamilton to interview 100 young males. The participants were recruited at local shopping malls, colleges, universities, bars, restaurants, youth employment centres, events, as well as while they were waiting for public transport. The three cities were chosen for their differences in smoking prevalence and rural versus urban differences (see Table 1).

Table 1: Recruitment Sites

Municipality	Prevalence of Smoking	Urban/Rural	Number of Participants
Toronto	19%	Urban	55
Hamilton	23%	Urban	19
Sault Ste. Marie	24%	Both	26

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## THE INTERVIEW CON'T

Two hundred and twenty two people were approached as potential participants; 45% (100) were interviewed.

- 37% (45) were ineligible because of the age restriction.
- 36% (44) were ineligible as they were not smokers (had not smoked 100 cigarettes in their lifetime or had not smoked a cigarette in the last 6 months).
- 27% (33) were either not interested in participating or had no time.

Eligible participants were asked their opinions about cessation services that are currently available in Ontario, as well as which services they would like to have available.

## PARTICIPANTS

Participants were males between 19-29 years of age, who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime, and had smoked at least one cigarette in the past six months (see Table 2).

Table 2: Participant Characteristics

Participant Demographics	
Mean age	23 years
Single marital status	75%
Daily smokers	87%
Highest Level of Education	
High school or less	43%
Enrolled in college/university	29%
Completed college/university	27%
Unknown	1%
Number of Cigarettes Per Day	
0-5	17%
6-10	25%
11-15	17%
16+	41%

## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

### Quit Intentions

Participants appeared ambivalent about their desire to quit. Most participants changed their minds during the interview, alternating between 'not wanting to quit' to 'wanting to quit,' as well as adjusting when they want to quit.

*I've been smoking for so long if I tried to quit I'd probably go crazy...I've been cutting back gradually but yeah I want to quit*  
(Toronto, 22 years old)

Forty-two per cent of participants said that they would rather gradually reduce the number of cigarettes smoked per day than quit outright.

*Um, reduce perhaps. But quitting when we'll see when ah, I guess when it's absolutely necessary*  
(Toronto, 24 years old)

The majority of young men said that stress and habit were keeping them from quitting.

*Stress. Bad habits. Sometimes it just happens, when stress triggers it.*  
(Toronto, 28 years old)

It was hard for many of the young men to separate smoking from their way of life and their self-identity.

*The fact that it's sort of entrenched into my way of life.*  
(Toronto, 29 years old)

*I feel when I'm not smoking a cigarette, it's just- I feel empty. Something, something's missing.*  
(Toronto, 23 years old)

Four per cent had never tried to quit, and had no desire to ever quit.

*I'm pretty happy with the amount that I smoke...it's enjoyable, it's relaxing, and it's social*  
(Hamilton, 22 years old)

### Participants and Quit Aids

When asked to name specific cessation services, 49% of participants replied that they had no idea what was available.

*I don't know anyplace I could go for help.*  
(Toronto, 27 years old)

The desire to use quit aids was also a complex issue. While most participants said that in their next quit attempt they would go cold turkey, many reported in the same interview that they would use more than one method of quitting.

### 1. Going Cold Turkey

Sixty-six per cent of participants reported they would quit cold turkey. Even participants who had unsuccessfully tried to quit cold turkey, claimed that they would try using this method again.

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*I'm pretty sure that once I'm ready to quit, I'll have the will power to do it by myself*  
(Toronto, 19 years old).

## 2. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

Fifty-nine per cent of participants reported they might use NRT in their next quit attempt; most participants who wanted to use NRT said that they would use the patch.

*Actually when I did contemplate quitting, that [the patch] would be the one thing that I would try. Friends tried it and said that it really does work.*  
(Toronto, 29 years old)

A number of males, 58%, said that their use of NRT in the past had been ineffective, but 23% said that they would be willing to try the patch or the inhaler again.

*I tried the inhalers before and that didn't seem to help at all...it would either be the inhalers, the patch...or something like that I would have to try.*  
(Hamilton, 27 years old)

Participants had several concerns about using pharmacotherapy, including side effects and cost.

*I heard it's pretty intense though...you put it on the patch goes right to your heart, so that's pretty scary.*  
(Toronto, 26 years old)

*It's cheaper for me to buy cigarettes than it is for me to purchase any smoking cessation aids.*  
(Hamilton, 29 years old)

## 3. Using the Internet

Although only 8% of respondents said that they had accessed the internet in order to quit or reduce smoking, 58% reported that they planned to search online for help during their next quit attempt.

*I would use the internet...I don't like interacting with people.*  
(Hamilton, 29 years old)

## 4. Counseling/Telephone Helpline

Most participants interviewed had never used, and were not interested in using counseling or telephone helplines. Among the common reasons provided were: not believing that tobacco use was an addiction that warranted counseling, not wanting to share personal information, and not believing that they needed help.

*For the same reason I wouldn't call a hotline, it's too personal, if it's an embarrassing concept, I'm not going.*  
(Toronto, 19 years old)

## Media Campaigns

Many smokers interviewed could speak only vaguely about the current media campaigns and advertisements. Participants were optimistic about the potential of campaigns and advertisements to become more appealing to themselves and their peers.

*When I see these commercials of guys that are talking out their, their larynx and smoking out of it and stuff like that, that stuff really, really gets me. That stuff makes me, you know, for that time being and two minutes after that commercial I, it's on my mind but slowly it dissipates and then I don't think about it anymore.*  
(Toronto, 29 years old)

Driven to Quit appears to have the potential to encourage young males to quit smoking. Although none of the smokers interviewed had ever participated, and only a relative few, 35%, had heard of the campaign, an overwhelming majority of participants said that they would sign up.

*[Driven to Quit] never heard of it, but absolutely. If I knew there was a car being given away for quitting smoking.*  
(Toronto, 24 years old)

## Effect of Smoke-Free Policies

Many participants (52%) credited implementation of Ontario's smoke free policies as one of the main reasons why they want to quit or reduce their smoking.

*It [smoking restrictions] just sort of reminds you how socially unacceptable it's becoming...I'm conscious of it on some level all the time...it helps me cut down.*  
(Toronto, 29 years old)

## Obstacles to Quitting

Smokers identified a number of obstacles hindering their quit attempts. These obstacles include: their image as a smoker, the belief that they can quit on their own, not knowing what current services exist and how to access them, having funds to access services, accessing healthcare professionals, and not believing that the services/methods will work for them.





## Lack of Tailored Programs

Throughout the interviews, a common belief was that services would be ineffective.

*No it won't [work] because it's different for everybody. I mean my addiction is mostly psychological...more people are physically dependent on it... haven't heard anything that's successful yet.*  
(Hamilton, 23 years old)

## Accessing Healthcare Professionals

Few participants interviewed reported being asked by a healthcare professional to quit or reduce their smoking. Of those who did receive advice from a doctor, very few participants (5%) found the advice to be effective.

*I don't know what a doctor could really do if they're just telling me to quit smoking that wouldn't really help so no [it didn't help].*  
(Toronto, 28 years)

Despite the lack of advice, and/or constructive advice, many (42%) participants believe that this could be an effective way to achieve cessation.

*It's the person I'm most comfortable with, and he will probably be able to give me the most wide range options.*  
(Hamilton, 19 years old)

*If they asked and then they informed me what medication I can be on and benefits and non-benefits*  
(Sault Ste. Marie, 25 years old)

Participants admitted, however, that they rarely go to see healthcare professionals.

## Influence of Family and Friends

Many participants said that their cessation efforts might be successful if they quit with a friend. In fact, networks were said to be used by 59 participants with short-term success. The participants commented that it was "nice" and "motivating" to "talk to friends who don't smoke." Some of the participants had even participated in planned quit attempts with friends:

*"They actually quit with me. It was actually really useful, because I find being around my friends, and trying to quit smoking is harder. So it's good to have your friends with you, because then you have less chance of having a smoke"*  
(Toronto, 19 years old)

A few times quitting with a friend was mentioned by participants because

*"a bet, or something like that is actually more of an incentive other than your willingness"*  
(Toronto, 20 years old)

## CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this series of newsletters information has been presented concerning the reach and effectiveness of Ontario's current smoking cessation system for young male adults. We presented data on the reach of the system, the effectiveness of the services as well as smokers viewpoints of what services they would like to use. In conclusion we can say that

- There is a need for an integrated and coordinated smoking cessation system to serve the needs of young adult males.
- Existing cessation services have a low rate of success for reaching and promoting smoking cessation for young male adults.
- There is very little evidence to guide development of cessation interventions for young adults.
- Friends and families might be an important resource in helping young male quit smoking.
- Smoking bans have a positive influence on promoting cessation amongst young adults.

More detailed information and analysis will be available in the final report.

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The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is an Ontario-based research network that is recognized as a Canadian leader in tobacco control research, monitoring and evaluation, teaching and training and as a respected source of science based information on tobacco control.