

INTRODUCTION

Little is known about the characteristics of youth smokers who seek treatment.

Recent data suggest that the majority of adolescent smokers report that they are motivated to quit smoking or have tried to stop smoking during the past year.

Despite their stated interest in or attempts to quit smoking, however, very few seek research based treatment, and the quit rate among adolescent smokers is quite low.

We explore the characteristics of adolescent treatment seekers and compare them to youth smokers who have not sought treatment.

This is a descriptive study using two National data sets with information on smoking and quitting among youth smokers.

METHODS

We describe a cohort of adolescent treatment seekers from the Helping Young Smokers Quit (HYSO) sample, and compare them to a cohort of youth smokers from the National Youth Smoking Cessation Survey (NYSCS) who have not sought treatment.

HYSO sample: Treatment Seekers

- In 2004 the HYSO Phase II program evaluation began with a competitive application process, resulting in the selection of 41 participating community based cessation programs from 18 states across the U.S.
- 878 youth enrolled in the programs completed a baseline survey.

NYSCS sample: Non-treatment Seekers

- The 2003 NYSCS collected information on tobacco use and quitting practices through a random-digit-dialed, computer-assisted telephone interview survey.
- A nationally representative sample of 678 youth smokers completed surveys at baseline.

Baseline characteristics, and smoking and quitting experience are compared across cohorts.

RESULTS

	TREATMENT SEEKERS N=878	NON-TREATMENT SEEKERS N=678
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>		
Average Age	16.8 years	17.2 years
Female	50%	46%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic Origin	13%	12%
<b>Race</b> (multiple responses were accepted: percentages do not total 100%)		
White	87%	80%
Black	9%	11%
Asian	2%	2%
American Indian/ Native American	6%	4%

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Of those youth enrolled in school last term, reported **scholastic performance** was:

Better than average	31%	39%
Average	44%	51%
Below Average	25%	10%

SMOKING EXPERIENCE

The percentage of those **who live with someone who smokes** was:

- 73% of treatment seekers
- 32% of non-treatment seekers

The percentage of those **who ever smoked cigarettes daily** was:

- 83% of treatment seekers
- 80% of non-treatment seekers

Among daily smokers, reported **mean age for when they started smoking every day** was:

- 13.21 years, treatment seekers
- 14.94 years, non-treatment seekers

Of those that smoked **during the past 30 days**, they reported **smoking on average**:

1- 5 cigarettes per day	46%	46%
6 - 10 cigarettes per day	30%	28%
11 - 20 cigarettes per day	20%	22%
>20 cigarettes per day	8%	4%

**Over 60%** of youth treatment seekers and **44%** of youth non-treatment seekers **smoke a cigarette within the first 30 minutes of waking.**

QUITTING EXPERIENCE

The percentage of those **who ever tried to quit**:

- 81% of treatment seekers
- 75% of non-treatment seekers

The percentage of those who **have tried to quit smoking "3 or more times"**:

- 41% of treatment seekers
- 28% of non-treatment smokers.

**Planning to quit smoking within the next 30 days** was reported by:

- 44% of treatment seekers
- 30% of non-treatment seekers

Current **level of confidence "to quit smoking if they decide to"** was rated on a scale from 1 (not at all confident) to 10 (extremely confident) with **means** of:

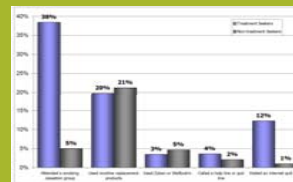
- 6.42 among treatment seekers
- 6.92 among non-treatment seekers

During the last quit attempt, **abstinence maintained "longer than 7 days"** was reported by:

- 32% of treatment seekers
- 41% of non-treatment seekers

CESSATION TREATMENT USE

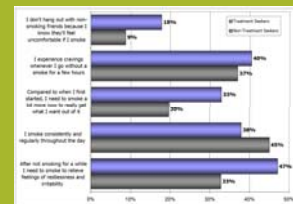
Reported treatment strategies ever used to help quit smoking



- **Internet quit site was visited by:** 12% of treatment seekers, 1% of non-treatment seekers
- **Nicotine replacement therapy was used by:** 20% of treatment seekers, 21% of non-treatment seekers
- **Smoking cessation group was attended by:** 38% of treatment seekers, 5% of non-treatment seekers

SYMPTOMS OF ADDICTION

Youth who reported that the experiences described were "often true" for them



- 47% of treatment seekers reported they **smoke to relieve feelings of restlessness and irritability**, compared to 33% of non-treatment seekers.
- 38% of treatment seekers reported **consistent and regular smoking throughout the day**, compared to 45% of non-treatment seekers.
- 33% of treatment seekers reported the **need to smoke more now to get what they want out of it**, compared to 20% of non-treatment seekers.

INDICATORS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Compared to non-treatment seekers, treatment seekers were more likely to report experiencing the described feelings "often" during the past 30 days:

- Inability in controlling the important components of their life (19% compared to 14%).
- Feeling unable to overcome difficulties that were piling up (23% compared to 14%).
- Confidence in their ability to handle personal problems (28% compared to 52%).
- Feeling that things were going their way (17% compared to 36%).

DISCUSSION

The two samples were very similar with regard to:

- Demographic characteristics
- Daily smoking
- Intensity of smoking (i.e., # of cig/day)
- Ever tried to quit at least once
- Level of confidence to successfully quit
- Use of NRT

Treatment seekers show greater signs of academic and intrapersonal challenge.

- Below average school performance
- Lacking the confidence to handle personal problems
- Feeling that things are not going their way
- Overwhelmed by life's difficulties

Treatment seekers are more likely to live in a home environment where smoking is the norm, as evidenced by:

- Becoming a daily smoker at an earlier age
- Living with other smokers, which can make cigarettes more accessible for youth

Treatment seekers appear to be continually and more consistently engaged in the quit process, as suggested by a larger proportion who reported that they:

- Have tried three or more times to quit
- Plan to quit within the next 30 days
- Use a variety of treatment strategies to aid in the quit process

Treatment seekers appear to have a stronger addiction:

- The majority smoke their first cigarette within the first 30 minutes after waking.
- They smoke to relieve feelings of restlessness and irritability.
- They need to smoke more now to satiate their craving.

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Collaborators

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