The Association Between Chronic Disease and Smoking Beliefs and Behaviors in African American Young Adult Smokers

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Purpose: African American young adults have higher rates of smoking and chronic disease than Whites. Understanding the association between chronic disease and smoking beliefs and behaviors could improve cessation strategies for young adult smokers.

Methods: African American young adult smokers aged 18–29 years (n=243) were administered surveys assessing smoking beliefs and behaviors. Participants indicated if they had physician-diagnosed asthma, diabetes, and/or hypertension. Responses were analyzed using logistic regression, comparing responses of those diagnosed with a chronic disease to those without that disease.

Results: Smokers with asthma were 2.20 times more likely to acknowledge smoking negatively affected their health yet were no more likely to make a quit attempt than those without asthma. Diabetic smokers were 4.10 times more likely than those without to make a quit attempt, yet were 3.24 times more likely to disagree that they were in control of their smoking. Hypertensive smokers were more likely to be heavier smokers and were 3.12 times more likely to disagree that they would stop smoking if they knew it affected the health of others than those without hypertension. Smokers with chronic disease were less likely to be influenced to quit by their physician than smokers without.

Conclusions: African American young adult smokers with a chronic disease often diverge from smokers without that chronic disease in smoking beliefs and behaviors. These may influence how young adults respond to cessation messages and programs. (Ethn Dis. 2014;24[4]:488–494)

Key Words: African American, Smoking, Asthma, Diabetes, Hypertension, Young Adult

INTRODUCTION

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.1 Young adults, aged 18–24 years, now have the highest smoking rate of any age group in the United States.2 Approximately 40% of African Americans who have ever smoked started smoking between the ages of 18 and 21,3,4 resulting in adulthood smoking rates (26.4%) that surpass Hispanics (19.8%) and Whites (20.8%).5 This poses a significant public health concern as African Americans are less likely than Whites and Hispanics to quit smoking once they start and suffer greater health effects from smoking later in life.6–8

In addition to high smoking rates, African Americans also have one of the highest rates of chronic disease among racial/ethnic groups, and are more likely to die sooner from chronic disease than Whites and Hispanics. African Americans have the highest rates of hypertension among adults, regardless of sex or education level, and racial/ethnic disparities are greatest among young adults.9,10 African Americans also have a higher prevalence of diabetes than Whites.9,10 Younger adults who develop type 2 diabetes have a greater risk of a more aggressive disease and higher risk of many complications compared to adults who develop type 2 diabetes later in life.11,12 Furthermore, African Americans have one of the highest rates of asthma compared to other racial/ethnic groups.13,14 The disparity in asthma between African Americans and Whites is evident at all age levels.14,15

Smoking contributes to and worsens symptoms of numerous chronic diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, and asthma.16 Complications of these diseases can lead to a lifetime of poor health outcomes and quality of life as well as perpetuating or increasing health disparities. Understanding the association between chronic disease and beliefs of African American young adult smokers toward smoking and quitting smoking could have a significant impact on public health by increasing quit attempts among young adult smokers.

Currently, little is known about African American young adult smokers and how the presence of chronic disease is associated with how they think and feel about smoking and quitting smoking. The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify differences in smoking beliefs among African American young adult smokers with chronic disease, and differences in beliefs for different chronic diseases.

METHODS

A survey assessing smoking beliefs was administered to African American young adult smokers in community-based settings. This exploratory study used the Theory of Planned Behavior as a guide for survey question development.17 Additional survey questions were developed from a review of

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