MESSAGE THEMES: COMMUNICATING INFORMATION ABOUT E-CIGARETTES TO ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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INTRODUCTION

- Electronic cigarettes are new modified risk tobacco products (MRTP).
- Electronic cigarette use among young adults and adolescents is rapidly gaining popularity.
- Life time use of use electronic cigarettes among young adults is about 7% (Choi & Forster, 2013).
- Life time use among adolescents is 1%; however, 18% of participants surveyed were willing to try electronic cigarettes (Pepper et al. 2013).
- Tobacco marketing contributes significantly to the use of tobacco products by adolescents and young adults.
- Therefore, it is crucial to understand how to communicate the risks and harms associated with MRTP to prevent tobacco use.
- Such knowledge can also inform the FDA on regulating the advertising of MRTP to adolescents and young adults.
- The objective of this qualitative focus group study was to develop effective messages conveying information about electronic cigarettes to adolescents and young adults.

METHODS

- This study was part of a larger qualitative study examining perceptions of various MRTP by adolescents and young adults.

PARTICIPANTS

- We conducted 8 focus groups (4-8 participants each) in a high school and a college in CT.
- There were 4 groups in each school:
  - Male smokers (High school: n=6, College: n=7)
  - Female smokers (High school: n=4, College: n=8)
  - Male non-smokers (High school: n=8, College: n=8)
  - Female non-smokers (High school: n=6, College: n=6)

PROCEDURES

- Focus group moderators asked students to create 2 messages about electronic cigarettes.
  - A message that would make electronic cigarettes appealing to their peers.
  - A message that would make electronic cigarettes unappealing to their peers.

DATA ANALYSIS

- Two independent reviewers coded all content themes and any differences were addressed through discussion.

RESULTS

Table 1: Content themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Appealing Messages</th>
<th>Unappealing Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Save money by switching to electronic cigarettes.</td>
<td>Save your money, electronic cigarettes cost too much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavor</td>
<td>Use electronic cigarettes for great tasting new flavors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>Use electronic cigarettes and you won’t smell nasty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>You can protect yourself from health risks by using electronic cigarettes.</td>
<td>You put yourself at risk for developing health problems by using electronic cigarettes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes look like the real thing (smokers).</td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes are not as satisfying as a real cigarette (smokers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perception to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigarettes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>You can smoke electronic cigarettes anywhere!</td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes have to be charged constantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitting Cigarette</td>
<td>Use electronic cigarettes to quit smoking. Without the withdrawal!</td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes will not help you quit smoking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Acceptance</td>
<td>Use electronic cigarettes to fit in with your friends!</td>
<td>If you use electronic cigarettes, people will still see you as a smoker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-cigarette</td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes have water vapor and that’s not bad for your lungs.</td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes can make you addicted to nicotine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic cigarettes have questionable chemicals infused with water vapor that can absorb into your lungs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS

- Messages relaying information about the health effects of electronic cigarettes, similarities to cigarettes, and describing the chemicals in the electronic cigarettes were identified as deterrent to using the product.
- On the other hand, messages that emphasize convenience and safety of use make electronic cigarettes more appealing to young people.
- The contents of appealing and unappealing messages may be used to tailor messages to prevent the use of electronic cigarettes and other tobacco products.

REFERENCES
