

SAND abstract No. 35 from the BEACH program 2001–02

Subject: Smoking status of adults and their attempts to quit

Organisation supporting this study: Department of Health and Ageing.

Issues: The smoking status of adult patients and their levels of success, the methods used by current and former smokers in attempts to quit, the time since they last smoked or last attempted to quit were examined.

Sample: 5,823 encounters with patients aged 18 and over, from 231 GPs; data collection period: 21/1/2002-1/4/2002.

Method: Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method' on this website (<http://www.fmrc.org.au/beach.htm>). A Quit Smoking Key List with 12 quitting methods, including 'cold turkey', nicotine patches and bupropion (Zyban), was made available to patients to indicate which methods they had used to quit (former smokers) or attempt quitting (current smokers).

Summary of results

The majority of patients aged 18 or more had never smoked (51.7%, 95%CI: 49.6–53.8). Former daily smokers accounted for 19.5% of patients (95%CI: 18.2–20.9), followed by current daily smokers, representing 18.6% (95%CI: 17.1–20.1). Former occasional smokers and current occasional smokers accounted for 6.8% and 3.4% of patients respectively. Grouping daily and occasional together, former smokers accounted for 26.3% (95%CI: 24.8–27.9) and current smokers 22.0% (95%CI: 20.2–23.7) of patients.

Female patients were significantly more likely than males never to have smoked (59.9% compared to 37.2%). Significantly more male patients were current daily (23.7%) and former daily (29.5%) smokers, compared with female patients (15.8% and 13.9% respectively). Levels of occasional smoking were similar for male and female patients.

There were 1,473 former smokers who indicated a quitting method from the Key list, and 91.9% of these indicated using only one method. Of these, the most frequent single method used was 'cold turkey' (89.0%) followed by nicotine patches (3.5%). Bupropion had been used by 26 patients (1.8%), of whom 17 used only this method.

Of the 1,280 current smokers, 53.3% had tried to quit smoking during the previous 5 years, and the majority (82.6%) of these had used only one method. The most frequently used methods were 'cold turkey' (62.9%) followed by nicotine patches (26.3%) and Bupropion (12.9%).

Of the 1,703 patients who had tried to quit 'cold turkey' (+/- other methods) 75.7% (95%CI: 73.1–78.3) reported they were not currently smoking. Of the 348 who tried using nicotine replacement therapy (ie: patches/gum/inhaler) (+/- other methods), one third had quit (37.4% 95% CI: 31.1–43.7). Of the 85 who tried to quit with bupropion, one in four (23.4%, 95%CI: 5.9–40.9) were not currently smoking but the small numbers involved rendered this estimate somewhat unreliable (as shown by the wide confidence intervals).

Correspondence to: Lisa Valenti, GPSCU