

SAND abstract No. 53 from the BEACH program 2002–03

Subject: Smoking status of adults and their attempts to quit

Organisation: Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)

Issues: The smoking status of adult patients, the methods used by current and former smokers in attempts to quit and the success of these methods, and time since they last smoked or last attempted to quit were examined. This is a follow-up to abstract No 35.

Sample: 2,510 encounters with patients aged 18 and over, from 97 GPs; data collection period: 25/2/2003–30/3/2003.

Method: Detailed in the paper entitled 'SAND Method: 2002-03' on the FMRC website (http://www.fmrc.org.au/publications/SAND_abstracts.htm).

A Quit Smoking Key List with 12 quitting methods, including 'cold turkey', nicotine patches and Bupropion, 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 greater proportion of patients aged 18 or more had never smoked (49.9%, 95%CI: 46.5–53.3). Former daily smokers accounted for 22.6% of patients (95%CI: 20.0–25.1), followed by current daily smokers, representing 17.1% (95%CI: 15.0–19.3). Former occasional smokers and current occasional smokers accounted for 7.1% and 3.4% of patients respectively.

Grouping daily and occasional together, former smokers accounted for 29.6% (95%CI: 27.0–32.3) and current smokers 20.5% (95%CI: 18.1–22.8) of patients.

Female patients were significantly more likely than males never to have smoked (58.0% compared to 36.3%). Significantly more male patients were former daily smokers (32.4%) than female patients (16.6%). Levels of occasional smoking were similar for male and female patients.

There were 734 former smokers who indicated a quitting method from the Key list, and 92.8% of these indicated using only one method. Of these, the most frequent single method used was 'cold turkey' (89.4%) followed by nicotine patches (3.5%). Bupropion was used by 10 former smokers (1.4%), of whom 6 used only this method.

Of the 514 current smokers, 55.4% had tried to quit smoking during the previous 5 years, the majority (74.1%) using only one method. The most frequently used methods were 'cold turkey' (59.6%) followed by nicotine patches (31.9%) and Bupropion (13.7%).

Of the 814 patients who had tried to quit 'cold turkey' (+/- other methods) 80.2% (95%CI: 76.7–83.7) reported they were not currently smoking. Of the 164 who tried using nicotine replacement therapy (i.e.: patches/gum/inhaler) (+/- other methods), one third had quit (36.6% 95% CI: 27.2–46.0). Of the 47 who tried to quit with Bupropion, one in four (21.3%, 95%CI: 1.0–41.5) were not currently smoking but due to small numbers this estimate is somewhat unreliable (as shown by the wide confidence intervals).

Correspondence to: Lisa Valenti, GPSCU