

Researchers use motivational coaching to help young adults quit smoking

November 7 2014, by Jeff Renaud

A new study from Western University has produced remarkable results in the battle against butting out. The research team from Western's Faculty of Health Sciences used motivational interviewing with young adults (19-25) attempting to quit smoking and found that more than one in every four participants were smoke-free at the one-year, post-intervention, follow-up interview.

While previous studies have employed motivational interviewing, the Western study was the first-ever to implement it using specific coaching tools to ensure its consistent application along with a control group. This design provided the researchers with invaluable evidence-based results to strengthen the validity of the approach. Motivational interviewing (MI) is a counselling/coaching technique that is tailored to individuals. The technique allows individuals to be the driving force behind their own behavioural change.

"We have known for some time that MI works to help smokers [quit](#), but implementing it in a consistent way with certified coaches has produced a dramatic improvement in quitting success, an improvement that is much higher than other studies based on various counselling approaches or nicotine replacement methods," explains Tara Mantler, a postdoctoral fellow at Western's Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing, who led the study.

Mantler and her faculty colleagues, Jennifer Irwin, Don Morrow, Craig Hall and Angela Mandich, found that 27.5 per cent of the study's

participants were smoke-free 12 months after the initial [intervention](#), which is a remarkable success rate. The findings were published in *Addiction, Research & Theory*.

"Compared to other interventions, this approach is substantially more effective," says Mantler. "None of the control group participants quit on their own but many individuals that used [motivational interviewing](#) not only quit but quit at a very high rate."

Smoking is a truly unique behaviour in that many people that smoke define themselves as smokers – that's who they are.

"It becomes part of their identity and what we see with an MI intervention is that people start to disentangle themselves from the behaviour," says Irwin, a professor in Western's School of Health Studies. "Smoking is often a symptom of something else. It can be a tool for coping with stress or other external pressures. What was the reason that they started smoking? What is the reason that they are still smoking? Being able to come to terms with these questions and understanding the answers is crucial to helping people quit."

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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