

Social media helps young adults quit smoking

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

Young adults who use social media to quit smoking are twice as successful in their efforts as those who use a more traditional method, according to new research from the University of Waterloo.

The study, published last week in *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, compared the success of the [social media](#)-based campaign [Break It Off](#) with Smokers' Helpline, a telephone hotline for [young adults](#) looking to quit smoking.

After three months in the program, 32 per cent of smokers who used Break It Off apps and web tools had quit smoking, compared to 14 per cent of their peers who used the telephone-based support.

"These findings suggest that the creators of public health campaigns need to evaluate how they use social media channels and social networks to improve health, especially with regards to younger demographics," said Bruce Baskerville, a senior scientist at the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact at Waterloo, who led the study.

In Canada, young adults aged 19 to 29 have the

highest rate of smoking, but they report low use of traditional cessation services, such as helplines. Young adults make up the largest demographic of social media users, with 91 per cent using Facebook and one-third actively engaged in microblogging sites, such as Twitter.

"Traditional cessation services can have limited reach and this reduced visibility lessens their impact in a digital era," said Baskerville. "Because they are such heavy users of social media, these platforms provide an alternative and successful way of reaching smokers who are less likely to relate to other cessation programs."

The Canadian Cancer Society launched Break It Off in January 2012 to engage young adults in smoking cessation through an interactive website and social media. The campaign, which compares quitting smoking with ending a romantic relationship, provides users with an interactive website and smartphone app to encourage [smoking cessation](#).

More information: *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, ntr.oxfordjournals.org/content/.../ntr.ntv119.abstract

Provided by University of Waterloo

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