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A Technology-Based Smoking Cessation Intervention for Foster Youth: Initial Reactions


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Title: A Technology-Based Smoking Cessation Intervention for Foster Youth: Initial Reactions

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Abstract (250 Words or less):

While nearly one in three foster youth smoke daily, there is minimal screening and treatment in this population. Interventions that are accessible and engaging are needed to help reduce this health disparity.

This study tested the feasibility and acceptability of a smoking cessation treatment (iHeLP) delivered via computers and mobile phones among weekly cigarette smokers leaving foster care (ages 18 to 20). After study completion, we interviewed participants from the intervention (n=18) and control (n=17) groups. Interview themes included how participants felt the program worked/did not work, suggested changes, and perceived barriers to quitting. Transcripts were independently coded by two authors. A codebook was developed throughout the coding process, and all transcripts were reviewed again with the final codebook.

iHeLP participants felt that the program helped them reflect on their smoking habits and triggers. They also found iHeLP simple, which increased engagement. For some, the messages became an integral aspect of daily living, and most wished the program lasted longer than 6 months. Participants suggested an addition of a monthly chatroom Q&A session with a professional, a cessation counselor, smoking related videos, and peer support specialists. Participants from the control group (who received generic motivational messages) also found the intervention simple and easy to use. Suggestions for change include weekly tracking of cigarette utilization, help identifying smoking triggers, quitting advice, and positive feedback on smoking behavior changes, validating the content of iHeLP.

Trends towards FDA approval of technology based smoking interventions offer promising opportunities to reduce smoking rates in this population.