11-2011

Smoking and Breast Cancer: Girls’ and Boys’ Reactions to Tailored, Internet Delivered Messages

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Repository Citation
Bottorff, Joan L.; Richardson, Chris G.; Haines-Saah, Rebecca; Oliff, John; Hutchinson, Peter; Ratner, Pamela A.; Okoli, Chizimuzo T.C.; Gotay, Carolyn; and Johnson, Kenneth, "Smoking and Breast Cancer: Girls’ and Boys’ Reactions to Tailored, Internet Delivered Messages" (2011). Nursing Presentations. 15.
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**Background**

- Active smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) are causally linked to premenopausal breast cancer (BC).
- To date, there have been few efforts to raise awareness of active smoking and SHS as risk factors for BC.

**Purpose**

- To develop and evaluate messages for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adolescent girls and boys to raise awareness about tobacco exposure as a risk factor for BC.

**Methods**

**Message Development**

- Preliminary messages were designed based on our previous research (Bottorff et al., 2010; Haines et al., 2010), the literature, and gendered norms among youth.
  - The messages were presented for feedback on design and appropriateness to 43 youth (18 were female, 20 were of Aboriginal descent) in 8 focus groups.
  - The findings informed the development of tailored messages.

**Message Evaluation**

- Nested randomized trial within a web-based cohort study of 2,273 youth from 74 secondary schools in British Columbia (BC Adolescent Substance Use Survey).
  - Participants within each school were randomized to either a control or intervention group \((n=1498)\).
  - The intervention group received a message tailored according to each participant’s gender and Aboriginal status about the risk for BC associated with tobacco.
  - The control group received a standard message about the risk of cancer associated with smoking.

**Key Findings**

- Exposure to a web-based message (control or intervention) did not significantly influence intentions to consistently reduce SHS exposure in the future.
  - Compared to the control group, non-Aboriginal boys in the intervention group were more likely to indicate that they planned to reduce their SHS exposure.
  - Exposure to the intervention was associated with an increase in requests to receive additional web-based information regarding the link between tobacco exposure and BC in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal girls, but not in boys.

**Conclusions**

- Few teens are aware of the increased risk of breast cancer associated with tobacco smoke exposure.
- Brief gender and Aboriginal-specific messages have the potential to stimulate information seeking about tobacco exposure and breast cancer risk.

**Acknowledgements**

Funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Research Alliance and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.