Perceptions of Smoking Health Risks During Pregnancy: Comparison of Smokers and Non-smokers

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Support for this project was provided by Tennessee Governor’s Office of Children’s Care Coordination.

BACKGROUND

- Smoking during pregnancy is associated with health problems for mother and baby.
- Smoking rates during pregnancy in East Tennessee are more than three times the national average.
- Lack of knowledge about harmful effects from cigarette smoking may be closely related to cessation failure during pregnancy.

OBJECTIVE

- The goal of this study was to examine expectant mothers’ beliefs of harm from smoking to themselves and their unborn baby.
- Comparisons were examined between smokers and nonsmokers on how smoking was harmful.

METHODS

Participants

- 577 pregnant women (both smokers and non-smokers) were recruited prenatally to the TIPS program, and detailed information on their smoking status and beliefs was obtained.

Measures

- Smoking Questionnaire in the First Trimester
- Smoking status obtained through self-report upon entry into prenatal care.

RESULTS

A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between smoking status and perception of how smoking harms the baby, $\chi^2 (1, 578) = 65.85, \ p < .001$

A Chi-square test also indicated a significant association between smoking status and perception of how smoking harms the participant, $\chi^2 (1, 578) = 26.07, \ p < .001$

CONCLUSIONS

- Pregnant non-smokers believed that smoking is more harmful to their health and the health of their baby, when compared to pregnant smokers.
- Pregnant smokers may benefit from more in depth information on the negative health effects smoking has on their unborn baby.
- Analyzing perceptions of harm from smoking could lead to more successful smoking cessation interventions during pregnancy.