Cigarette smoking and ADHD: An examination of prognostically relevant smoking behaviors among adolescents and young adults.

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Abstract

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is associated with health risks in adolescence which includes the potential for smoking cigarettes, early smoking initiation, and rapid progression to daily smoking. Much less is known, however, about prognostically relevant smoking behaviors among individuals with childhood ADHD. Further research in this area is important for identifying individuals at pronounced risk for nicotine addiction, and for developing effective interventions for this population. This study examined initiation of cigarette smoking, progression to regular smoking, quantity of use, indicators of tobacco dependence, and quit rates among adolescents and young adults with (n = 364) and without (n = 240) childhood ADHD. Individuals with, versus without, ADHD histories were significantly more likely to become daily smokers independent of conduct disorder (CD). They were also more likely to initiate smoking at younger ages and to progress to regular smoking more quickly. There were no significant group differences in cigarettes smoked per day, Fagerström Test of Nicotine Dependence (FTND), or Nicotine Dependence Syndrome Scale (NDSS) scores or in smoking within 30 min of waking. However, smokers with ADHD reported more intense withdrawal and craving during periods of abstinence than non-ADHD smokers. There were no significant group differences in number of quit attempts. Lastly, there were no significant differences among symptom persisters and desisters in daily smoking and amount. Individuals with ADHD histories are at high risk for persistent smoking given their early onset, rapid course, and abstinence characteristics. Smoking cessation programs may need to be adapted or otherwise intensified for those with ADHD.