Examining a Pathway of Effects through Which Supportive Anti-smoking Messages may Lead to Changes in Quitting-related Beliefs, Intentions, and Behaviors

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Abstract:

Evidence for the effectiveness of anti-smoking messages that encourage smokers to keep trying to quit or that educate them about how to quit (supportive messages) is mixed (Durkin, Brennan, & Wakefield, 2012; National Cancer Institute, 2008b). In an effort to uncover some of the features of supportive messages that are associated with campaign effectiveness, the current research examined the extent to which the effectiveness of supportive messages may be explained by a recently developed model of the pathway through which anti-smoking messages about the negative health effects of smoking lead to changes in smoking behavior (Brennan, 2012). Across two studies (Study 1 N = 156; Study 2 N = 161) in which smokers were surveyed before and after their exposure to a supportive anti-smoking message, findings indicated that positive (e.g., hope and inspiration) and negative (e.g., anxiety and guilt) emotional responses, self-referencing thoughts, and perceptions of message effectiveness were all associated with endorsement of the campaign-targeted belief. In turn, the campaign-targeted belief (e.g., I am able to quit if I keep trying) was associated with changes in self-efficacy to quit; and self-efficacy was associated with changes in intentions to quit. These findings indicate that the model developed by Brennan (2012) provides a good starting point for understanding how it is that supportive anti-smoking messages may lead to changes in quitting-related self-efficacy, intentions, and behaviors. As such, the current findings have implications for the future development and evaluation of supportive anti-smoking messages.