

Smoking and stress: the double-edged sword of living in a disadvantaged area

Comments:

In most developed countries around the world people of low socioeconomic status (SES) are far more likely to smoke than those from high SES. Moreover, as smoking prevalence continues steadily to decline within general populations the gap appears to be widening with smokers of high SES successfully quitting at greater rates than those from low SES. Smokers of low SES tend to experience less peer pressure to quit and receive less social support when making a quit attempt, and indeed make less quit attempts and are generally less successful per attempt compared to their high SES counterparts. Recent data from the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey also suggests smokers from low SES have consistently higher levels of nicotine dependence. In all probability this is a result of the greater financial and psychological stress usually associated with social disadvantage and the fact that continued nicotine usage is almost universally attributed to stress management. In this manuscript Tsourtos, Ward and Muller provide insights into the role of stress as a major barrier to low SES smokers making successful quit attempts by presenting the results of a series of qualitative interviews and focus groups with low SES smokers.

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