

Nornicotine in Smokeless Tobacco as a Precursor for Carcinogen Exposure
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Abstract:

The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act requires that the amounts of harmful and potentially harmful constituents (HPHC) reported by tobacco manufacturers to the FDA be disclosed to the public in a format that is understandable and not misleading to lay persons. Previous research, which was mostly focused on cigarette smoke constituents, showed that consumers generally have inadequate awareness and understanding of chemicals in tobacco products, and may be misled into believing that lower amounts of specific constituents in cigarette smoke directly translate into reduced health risks. However, research on consumer perception of constituent levels in smokeless tobacco products is extremely limited. Aims of our proposal are: (1) To investigate differences in consumer understanding of HPHC information displayed in two formats: graphic and numerical. In our recent pilot study, we developed a graphic presentation of a gradient of constituent levels in smokeless tobacco products. In this Aim, we will apply a similar graphic format and compare it to a numerical presentation of smokeless tobacco constituent levels in a sample of the general population recruited online. As part of this Aim, we will also investigate differences in health risk perceptions and search behaviors as a function of the HPHC information display format; (2) To investigate, in a naturalistic in store context, the effect of incentives on motivation of smokeless tobacco users to seek out HPHC information on various brands of smokeless tobacco products. Increasing consumers' exposure to the published HPHC levels and motivating them to seek this information could deepen their understanding of harm caused by HPHCs in tobacco products, potentially resulting in a public health benefit. In this Aim, we will distribute information about our online resource developed in Aim 1 to purchasers of smokeless products in selected tobacco shops, and will study how incentives and other factors affect whether or not they visit our website; (3) To investigate which audience characteristics moderate knowledge levels, inferencing, and search behavior in the context of the two different HPHC information formats. This Aim will use information on tobacco use status, demographics, socioeconomic status, and numerical literacy collected from participants visiting our developed website in Aims 1 and 2. The results of this study will provide important information on effective communication of smokeless tobacco constituent levels to lay persons in general, and to smokeless tobacco users specifically.