

Cancer Center Support Grant

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Impact of Cigar Product Characteristics on Young People's Cigar Use and Perceptions

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Abstract:

While cigarette consumption in the United States continues to decline, consumption of cigars in the U.S has more than doubled since 2000. Tobacco trade publications recently noted that cigar sales continue to grow in the context of FDA regulation of cigarettes but not cigars. Anecdotal data from trade publications suggest that retailers have focused on flavored cigars to keep tobacco sales steady and that demand has increased since federal regulations banned flavoring in cigarettes. The product and marketing characteristics of cigars presumably appeal to young people by making a diverse selection of inexpensive products, including fruit, candy, and alcohol flavors, more accessible to all users. Not surprisingly, cigar prevalence is highest among these age groups. While the empirical research on the impact of such factors on cigarette use is well established, there is a paucity of data on the extent to which the product and marketing characteristics of cigars influence use. This project, in response to RFA-OD-12-007, seeks to explore the impact of specific product features such as brand, flavor, and packaging on cigar initiation, use, and perceptions. Our research addresses FDA-CTP interest area 2 (cigar initiation, use and perceptions), 6 (impact of tobacco product characteristics on initiation), and 9 (consumer perceptions of tobacco products, including impact of marketing). First, this research will analyze national sales data to better understand the impact of product features, such as type, brand, flavoring, size (e.g., little cigar or cigarillo), and packaging on cigar sales. Second, using mixed methods research we seek to understand consumer perceptions of cigar features via semi-structured interviews as well as a nationally representative survey of approximately 800 young adults who report smoking cigars. Third, we will examine the impact of three cigar pack features (brand, flavor and packaging) on consumer perceptions using a 2x3x2 factorial design experiment embedded into the national survey. The significance of this proposed research is its potential to generate a better understanding of cigar use and perceptions which is vital to informing FDA tobacco product regulation.