Youth Risk Perceptions of Snus, Orbs, and Other New Smokeless Products

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Results

Smokeless tobacco use among North Carolina (NC) students:
- No significant decrease in smokeless tobacco (SLT) use between 1999 and 2009 for NC middle and high school students
- Multiple forms of tobacco use strongly relate to one another

Snus and other new smokeless tobacco products marketed in a way that may appeal to youth:1
- Packaging resembles gum or candy; one survey of teens found 42% mistook Camel Orbs for candy2
- Snus marketed as alternative to cigarettes in situations where smoking is not allowed

2009 North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey (NCYTS):
- Included question to assess student awareness and perceptions of Snus and other new smokeless tobacco products: “Which of the following best describes what you think about new smokeless tobacco products such as snus, orbs, and strips?”
- First effort to measure perceptions as part of statewide surveillance

Data from the 2009 North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey:
- Biannual school-based paper survey of students in grades 6-12
- Participation voluntary and anonymous; school parental permission procedures followed
- Multi-stage cluster sample design with corresponding sampling weights to produce representative middle (grades 6-8) and high (grades 9-12) school data
- High overall response rates for middle (80.3%) and high (79.2%) schools, with a total of 3,805 middle and 3,301 high school students

Data analysis:
- Data analyzed using SAS survey procedures
- Chi square analyses to highlight differences in risk perception of new SLT products among middle and high school students

Data analyzed using SAS survey procedures

High overall response rates for middle (80.3%) and high (79.2%) schools, with a total of 3,805 middle and 3,301 high school students

Chi square analyses to highlight differences in risk perception of new SLT products among middle and high school students

Methods

Background

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Marketing of new SLT products reaching youth in NC
- With continued promotion, likely increased youth awareness of new SLT products
- Potential for new SLT product use as gateway to other tobacco use for current non-users
- High potential of dual use of cigarettes and new SLT products among students currently using or susceptible to tobacco
- Dual use creates additional barrier to quitting tobacco use
- Despite lack of consensus around new SLT products as harm reduction strategy,1 tobacco prevention programs must address marketing and potential risks associated with new SLT products

Limitations

- Descriptive results from a cross-sectional survey preclude conclusions about causality
- Self-reported data are subject to honesty of student respondents
- Results are specific to North Carolina and may not generalize to youth in other locales

Table 1. Perceived Risk of New SLT Products Among NC Middle School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever Smoked a Cigarette</th>
<th>Percent answering “Somewhat Less Risky”</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43.96%</td>
<td>(38.93%, 48.98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25.27%</td>
<td>(21.39%, 29.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptible to Smoking</td>
<td>38.38%</td>
<td>(31.97%, 44.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27.93%</td>
<td>(21.88%, 37.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.79%</td>
<td>(19.88%, 27.71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Perceived Risk of New SLT Products Among NC High School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever Smoked a Cigarette</th>
<th>Percent answering “Somewhat Less Risky”</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32.70%</td>
<td>(28.17%, 37.24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.65%</td>
<td>(18.21%, 27.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Used Smokeless Tobacco</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39.70%</td>
<td>(34.08%, 45.32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.12%</td>
<td>(20.01%, 26.24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptible to Smoking</td>
<td>36.99%</td>
<td>(32.51%, 41.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18.23%</td>
<td>(14.00%, 22.46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References

1. Mejia AB, Long PM, Glantz SA. Quantifying the Effects of Promoting Smokeless Tobacco as a Harm Reduction Strategy in the USA. Tob Control. 2011;20:207-21C.