Increasing Awareness and Credibility of FDA as a Tobacco Regulator: Results of two US National Surveys of Adults

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Background

- The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was given regulatory authority (2009) over some tobacco products under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act
- Along with regulation of tobacco, FDA is tasked with communicating risks of tobacco use to the public
- Studies report low public awareness that FDA regulates tobacco products
- The current study examines awareness of FDA tobacco regulation and FDA perceived credibility as a tobacco regulator among adults in the US in two repeated cross sectional surveys

Methods and Demographics

- Nationally representative surveys of adults
- Wave 2: 2016-2017
- Adults asked about:
  - Knowledge of FDA tobacco regulatory authority
  - Perceptions of credibility of FDA to regulate tobacco
  - Response options: Yes, No, Don’t Know
- Adults that had not heard of FDA were removed from these analyses (approx. 5%)
- Weighted frequencies presented with α=0.05, * indicates significant differences between waves

Results

Measures of Knowledge and Credibility of FDA Regulation of Tobacco

Knowledge of FDA:

- Do you think the FDA regulates how cigarettes are...
  - Made?
  - Advertised?
  - Sold in stores?
- Do you think the FDA communicates the risks of cigarettes and other tobacco products to the public? (added in Wave 2)

Credibility of FDA:

- Participants asked if they...
  - Trust FDA to inform public about tobacco product risks
  - Think the FDA is honest about tobacco product risks
  - Believe what the FDA says about the risks of tobacco products
  - Think FDA is capable of doing a good job regulating tobacco products
  - Think FDA can effectively regulate tobacco products
  - Think FDA is committed to protecting the public from the possible tobacco product risks
- Believe that if the FDA knew that certain tobacco products are less harmful, they would tell the public

Discussion

- Public awareness that FDA regulates cigarettes was fairly low among adults at wave 1 (2014 – 2015)
- Awareness of FDA regulation significantly increased at wave 2 (2016-2017)
- FDA continues to be perceived as mostly credible on tobacco issues
- Credibility of FDA significantly increased on 3 measures between waves 1 and 2
  - Expertise on regulating
  - Capable of doing a good job regulating
  - Effectively regulating
- Ongoing efforts by FDA to educate the public about the risks of tobacco product use may increase perceptions of FDA credibility

Strengths and Limitations

- Large cross sectional national survey conducted at 2 time points
- Weighted analysis is representative of adults in US
- Knowledge questions were randomly ordered, but 1 question was added at wave 2
- Future research from our group will expand on these analyses for a manuscript

Please contact Kristen Jarman if you have questions about this research
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