

Mass media interventions are effective in changing smoking behaviour

Clinical question	How effective are mass media interventions (MMIs) in reducing smoking among adults?
Bottom line	Comprehensive tobacco control programmes which include mass media campaigns can be effective in changing smoking behaviour in adults, but it is difficult to establish their independent role and value in this process. Five large studies out of the nine which reported smoking prevalence found some positive changes in smoking behaviour. Three large studies out of seven that measured the quantity of tobacco smoked found reductions. There were no consistent relationships between the effects of the campaign and age, education, ethnicity or gender of those participating.
Caveat	The evidence comes from a heterogeneous group of studies of variable methodological quality. Over half of the studies which measured quit rates reported significant increases in abstinence, but this finding was difficult to interpret because studies used different definitions of smoking, smokers and quit attempts. The intensity and duration of MMIs may influence effectiveness, but length of follow-up and concurrent events in the community can make this difficult to verify.
Context	About 1.1 billion adults, or one in three worldwide, now smoke. MMIs involve communication through television, radio, newspapers, billboards, posters, leaflets or booklets, with the intention of encouraging smokers to stop, and of maintaining abstinence in non-smokers. Campaigns may be local, regional or national, and may be combined with other components of a comprehensive tobacco control policy.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Bala M et al. Mass media interventions for smoking cessation in adults. Cochrane Reviews 2008, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD004704. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD004704.pub2. This review contains 11 studies involving many millions of participants. Sites included California, Sydney and Melbourne.
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