



Limited evidence for competitions and incentives for smoking cessation

Clinical question

How effective are competitions and incentives for smoking cessation?

Bottom line

Only 1 study demonstrated significantly higher quit rates for the incentives group than for the control group beyond the 6-month assessment. This trial referred its participants to local smoking cessation services, and offered substantial cash payments (up to US\$750) for prolonged abstinence. In the remaining trials, there was no clear evidence that participants who committed their own money to the programme did better than those who did not, or that contingent rewards enhanced success rates over fixed payment schedules. Paying smokers variable amounts of cash depending on their success in quitting was no more effective than paying them fixed amounts for attending the programme. There was some evidence recruitment rates can be improved by rewarding participation, which may be expected to deliver higher absolute numbers of successful quitters.

Caveat

Cost-effectiveness analysis was not appropriate for this review, since the efficacy of most of the interventions was not demonstrated.

Context

Material or financial incentives may be used in an attempt to reinforce behaviour change, including smoking cessation. They have been widely used in workplace smoking cessation programmes, and to a lesser extent within community programmes.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Cahill K and Perera R. Competitions and incentives for smoking cessation. *Cochrane Reviews*, 2011, Issue 4. Article No. CD004307. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD004307.pub4.

This review contains 19 studies involving more than 4500 participants.

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