Objective According to WHO, smoking is an important cause of death in many countries. To encourage smoking cessation, persuasive messages can be used to raise smokers' risk perception. This work discusses challenges and solutions in designing a study to evaluate the impact of two different communication strategies ("gains from quitting" vs "losses from continuing smoking") in encouraging calls to a Quitline.

Methodology A pragmatic intervention study was conducted in two subway stations for 4 weeks. Large posters containing non-age specific images and texts, based on the theme "shortness of breath", were displayed on central dividing columns on the boarding platforms. Call rates from the selected stations, and respective rate ratios, overall and per study week, were calculated.

Results Passengers who were smokers, exposed to the positive-content message, called on average 1.7 times more often than those exposed to the negative-content message (p=0.01). Moreover, call rate ratios did not decline over the 4 weeks of the study (multiplicative interaction p=0.40).

Conclusions The effectiveness findings suggest that anti-smoking campaigns could use positive-content messages in order to recruit a larger smoker population. The proposed methodology can also be used to evaluate effectiveness of messages for 'capturing' individuals with other health problems (eg, alcohol abuse), thereby increasing its potential impact.

Objective To evaluate the differences in cigarette smoking prevalence in Brazil between 1989 and 2008.

Methodology We compared absolute and relative differences in smoking prevalence, overall and stratified by selected socio-demographic variables and birth cohort (20-year interval from 1929 to 1954 onwards). Data were obtained from National Household Survey on Health and Nutrition (1989, n=59 969) and Global Adult Tobacco Survey (2008, n=58 461). Generalised linear models with binomial family distribution, and either gaussian or logarithmic link function, were specified in order to obtain estimates, as well as to assess potential effect modification.

Results Crude and adjusted overall differences in smoking prevalences between 1989 and 2008 were, respectively: absolute, 15.4% and 11.8%; relative, 47.5% and 38.7%. We observed the highest declines in smoking prevalences among individuals aged 25–54 years-old (additive or multiplicative interaction p<0.001) and those with 8 years of schooling or more (multiplicative interaction p<0.001). Moreover, while stratifying by birth cohort, we found that, only in the absolute scale and with the exception of the youngest birth cohort (ie,1965–1974), men presented higher reductions than women (additive interaction terms <0.001).

Conclusions A large amount of laws against tobacco consumption have been adopted in Brazil since 1986, which may have contributed to the observed decline in smoking prevalence. It is of paramount importance to better understand the effectiveness of tobacco control actions implemented in a country and the evolution of its tobacco epidemic in order to improve/develop actions targeted to those who continued to smoke and/or started smoking in a “more hostile” environment.

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