

QUIT AND WIN CONTESTS – IS QUITTING THE ONLY OPTION?

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INTRODUCTION

Although 'reducing to quit' and 'quitting abruptly' produce comparable quit rates,¹ Quit and Win contests typically provide only the single option of an abrupt quit on a designated day. Offering the option of 'reducing to quit' may entice more smokers to enter the contest. Increasing contest enrolment would enhance the population impact of this proven population-based intervention.

Purpose

This study examined the smoking and quitting outcomes experienced by young adult contestants who pledged to reduce their smoking by 50%.

METHODS

would rather... contest

In winter 2011, the annual, 6-week *would rather...* contest was offered at 42 post-secondary institutions in Ontario, Canada. Smokers entering the contest pledged to:

Quit For Good (completely abstain from smoking)

Keep The Count (reduce smoking consumption by 50%)

Party Without The Smoke (abstain from smoking while drinking alcohol)

All contestants identified a peer support buddy, received regular support emails, and were eligible to win prizes valued up to \$1,000.

Sample and Measures

Study participants were *Keep The Count* contestants who consented to complete an online survey at baseline, and brief telephone interviews 1 month and 3 months following the contest start date. Measures assessed smoking and quitting behaviours.

RESULTS

Contest Registration

652 smokers registered for the contest using the online system.[†]

- 288 - *Quit For Good*
- 151 - *Keep The Count*
- 213 - *Party Without The Smoke*

Sample Characteristics

Of the 151 *Keep The Count* contestants, 64 (50.8%) volunteered for the study, and 31 (40.4%) completed all measures.

- 58.1% female
- Age: 23.2 (5.82)
- Weekly cigarette consumption: 51.03 (45.65)

Outcomes for *Keep The Count* Contestants

1-month Intervention Check (during the contest)

87.0% reported at least some reduction in their tobacco consumption

3-month Follow-up (after the contest)

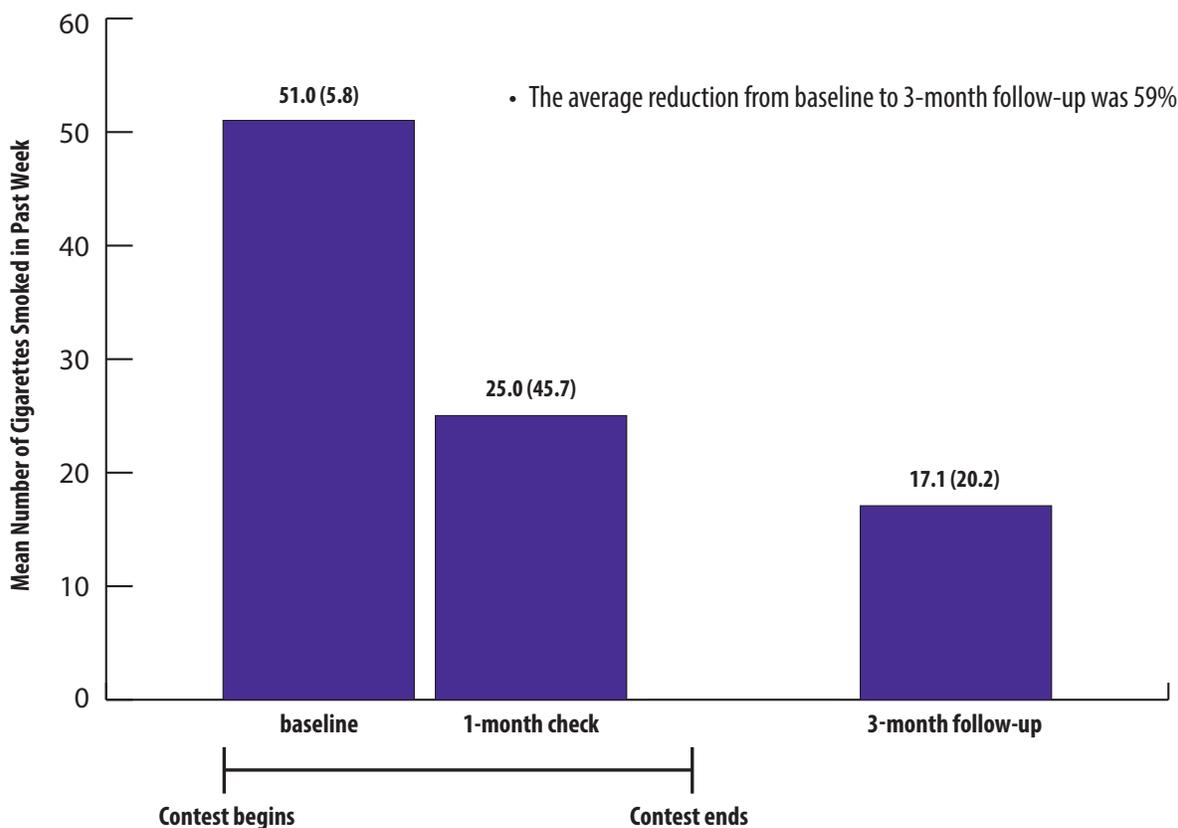
12.9% quit smoking during the contest and continued to be smokefree after the contest

61.3% reduced smoking by 50% or more during the contest and sustained this reduction after the contest

19.3% reduced smoking by less than 50%

6.0% did not reduce smoking

Declining Cigarette Consumption of *Keep The Count* Contestants



[†]Through all registration channels, 1,535 smokers joined the contest (833 *Quit For Good*; 261 *Keep The Count*; 441 *Party Without The Smoke*).

DISCUSSION

Keep The Count contestants accounted for 17% of all smokers joining the **would rather...** contest.

- A 'reduce-to-quit' option may increase enrollment in Quit and Win contests and thus enhance the population impact of this widely-used cessation intervention.

Average weekly tobacco consumption fell during the 6-week contest period, and continued to decline after the contest.

- A 'reduce-to-quit' option appears to successfully prompt immediate and sustained reductions in young adult smokers' tobacco consumption.

Almost all contestants (94%) were smoking fewer cigarettes at the 3-month follow-up; most (71%) had surpassed the requirement of a 50% reduction; and 13% had actually quit smoking.

- Positioning reduction as a legitimate end goal for smokers supports harm reduction and may ultimately engage more smokers in the process of quitting smoking.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Interventions that hasten young adult smokers' progression to 'former smoker' status are vital. Future research should address:

- Long-term reduction and cessation outcomes of 'reduce to quit' strategies for young adult smokers
- Viability of integrating harm reduction strategies into technology-based, self-help, or assisted interventions for young adults
- Contest outcomes for other age groups (teens, adults)

REFERENCES

1. Lindson-Hawley, N., Aveyard P. & Hughes, J.R. (2012). Reduction versus abrupt cessation in smokers who want to quit. *The Cochrane Library*.

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