

Development of a Tailored Text Message Program for Smoking Cessation Among People Experiencing Social Disadvantage

Ayesha Thaliph¹, Bridget C. Howard¹, Jack Anderson¹, Edel O'Grady¹, Josephine Ricciuti¹, Simon Caldwell¹, Hayden McRobbie¹, Ryan J. Courtney¹

¹National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

Presenter's email: a.thaliph@unsw.edu.au

Introduction: Text message quit support can increase smoking cessation rates. A key adaptive strength is its capacity to be tailored to groups or individuals. Text programs aimed at modifying health behaviours should follow specific design and development steps, emphasising rigorous pretesting and responsiveness to consumer feedback. This research examines the composition and development of a tailored text message program for smoking cessation, providing feasibility data on program roll-out and participant utilisation in a smoking cessation trial.

Methods: An expert advisory group drafted the tailored text program, building on previous successful programs. It underwent two refinement phases of consumer consultation with people who currently or previously smoked from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Phase 1 (n=10), consumers reviewed the program's structure, themes, and features, leading to amendments prior to Phase 2. In Phase 2 (n=5), consumers reviewed text content and wording. Feedback sessions were conducted via Zoom. The program is part of an active comparator trial against Quitline telephone support, with recruitment completed September 2023 and final feasibility data analysis in October 2024.

Results: Phase 1 feedback involved appraisal of the program features, tailoring, and behaviour change techniques, with requested reduced text frequency and volume. Phase 2 feedback was positive for the amended program, resulting in content edits for acceptability. The final program features an interactive keyword function, a 'Quit Buddy' persona, and tailoring of messages. It delivers 318 texts over 12 months, starting with three messages per day then tapering to two per week. The program is currently in the field, concluding September 2024. Feasibility data will be analysed and available for presentation.

Discussions and Conclusions: The text program uses evidence-based behaviour change techniques and iterative consumer feedback. Strategic reduction in message frequency supports sustained cessation efforts and relapse prevention. Development outcomes accentuate high user acceptability, which is likely to translate into better engagement and program effectiveness.

Implications for Practice or Policy: If effective, the findings can inform the broader implementation of text message-based smoking cessation interventions. Its affordability, scalability and tailored approach reduces barriers to access and provides personalised support, which could significantly enhance cessation rates among priority populations.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: No authors have received financial support from any companies for the submitted work. The study is funded by an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant (APP1162583). The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Substance Misuse Prevention and Service Improvements Grants Fund. RC is supported by a Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship (105983).