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Conference Proceedings

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Poster(s)

Men and smoking: An exploration of factors influencing the maintenance of smoking and smoking cessation for gay and straight men

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Background: This study explored factors affecting smoking and health amongst men based on their socioeconomic status and sexuality; men from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to be smokers and there is a higher smoking prevalence within the gay population than within the general population. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the decision-making processes to continue smoking or to stop smoking and the impact this may have on stop smoking service provision.

Method: 17 semi-structured interviews with men were conducted; 10 with straight men and seven with gay men. The qualitative data was analysed using grounded theory.

Findings: The theme that emerged was 'Reducing the potential for cognitive dissonance, caused by the action of smoking, by rationalising, normalising and minimising intrinsic and extrinsic factors and negotiating the sense of self'. Intrinsic factors included rationalising maintenance behaviour, availability of the product, life-stage of the smoker, psychosocial factors and sexuality. Extrinsic factors included meaning of smoking to self, interpretation of health advice, health protective behaviour and men's relationship with their body. These are negotiated by the image of smoking, the image of the product and masculinity.

Discussion: Although limited differences were found between the two groups to either continue to smoke or to stop smoking, this study illustrates the utility of health psychology when exploring approaches to behaviour change and highlights the need for an appreciation

of psychosocial, economic and environmental contexts that create the lived reality when targeting and treating men to promote a 'smokefree' life.