

Factors to Consider in Smoking Interventions for Indigenous Women

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More than 18,000 Australians die annually from diseases caused by tobacco. Indigenous Australians suffer a greater smoking-related disease burden than the remainder of the general public and have a higher prevalence of tobacco use than other Australians. The overall decline in smoking rates is slowest in women of low educational status between the ages of 25-44. This is of particular concern as these young women may be pregnant or raising young children. During pregnancy, the effects on the foetus from cigarette smoke include respiratory illness, low birthweight and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. However, if the mother is able to give up smoking by her fourth month of pregnancy, her risk of delivering a low birthweight baby decreases to nearly that of a non-smoker. As part of the planning to develop an effective smoking cessation program for young Indigenous pregnant women, the Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Services (TAIHS) surveyed a group of women to assess smoking habits, attitudes to smoking, nicotine dependence and readiness for change. This paper reports on this survey and the results found can be used to develop a tailored, smoking cessation program for Indigenous women.

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