

Latinos Need Culturally Appropriate Smoking Cessation Programs

By Jennifer Brooks

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Latinos who smoke have different attitudes and beliefs than non-Latino Whites when it comes to smoking, according to a study by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR) published in a recent issue of the agency's newsletter, *Research Activities*. The study suggests public health media programs should encourage Latinos to quit smoking cigarettes based on those attitudes and beliefs.

According to the study, Latinos most often quit smoking because of criticism from family members, concern about the children's health, and a desire to set a good example for their children, while Whites were more often concerned about their own health and desire to achieve the difficult goal of quitting smoking.

Therefore, according to Eliseo J. Perez-Stable, MD, "if the goal of public health media programs is to encourage Latinos to quit smoking cigarettes, they should emphasize quitting for the sake of the family's health and decrease emphasis on quitting to improve personal health." Dr. Perez-Stable is co-director of the AHCPR-supported MEDTEP Research Center for Diverse Populations at the University of California, San Francisco.

The study also revealed that Latinos were more likely than Whites to believe tobacco is not addictive. Whites were more likely than Latinos to continue smoking to avoid gaining weight.

Dr. Perez-Stable suggests physicians should focus on maintenance of the family's health and personal appearance, as opposed to personal health, to increase Latino patients' motivation to quit smoking.

The AHCPR study involved a random survey of 312 Latino smokers and 354 non-Latino Whites age 18-65 who resided in the San Francisco area. A detailed report of the findings, "Ethnic comparison of attitudes and beliefs about cigarette smoking," by Dr. Perez-Stable, et al., can be found in the March 1998 issue of the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. ❖

