

Which Health Literacy Skills Are Associated with Smoking?

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Dear Editor,

Health literacy is dependent on literacy and includes knowledge, motivation and the capacity of individuals to access, understand, evaluate and use health information in order to have everyday judgments and make decisions about health care, disease prevention and health promotion for maintaining or improving life quality [1]. Benefitting from health literacy can improve health behaviors and access to health care [2]. The most recent study on the relationship between health literacy and smoking concluded that low health literacy is an independent risk factor for smoking [3]. Youth experience a new situation with university admission and separation from families. This progressing group is at risk of smoking due to various reasons such as age, mental or emotional sympathies because of being away from families, psychological pressures, absence of parental control, a sense of personal growth and independence, relative financial autonomy and friends who smoke. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between health literacy skills and smoking or non-smoking behavior of dormitory students of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran in 2016. Sample of this cross-sectional and correlational study consists of 340 students studying at undergraduate level of various fields of medical sciences who were selected using random cluster sampling out of 1,500 students in dormitories. For data collection, a questionnaire of 41 questions consisted of three parts was used: demographic factors that were three questions about age, gender and school year, HELIA questionnaire (18 - 65 years old) including 33 questions about skills of reading, accessibility, understand, appraisal and decision making and standardized questionnaire that determined the status of the subjects in terms of smoking or non-smoking behavior and had 5 questions. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS, version 21. The results showed that mean and standard deviance for the age of the participating students was 22.93 ± 4.05 years old. 60 percent ($n = 204$) of them were female and 40 percent ($n = 136$) were male. Forty

one percent ($n = 140$) were second-year students and 59 percent ($n = 200$) were third-year students. Twenty three percent ($n = 80$) of them were current smokers, 59.5 percent ($n = 202$) were non-smokers and 17 percent ($n = 58$) had experienced cigarette smoking. The mean and standard deviation of accessibility skills was 74.75 ± 17.72 , reading skill 69.22 ± 21.25 , understand 77.24 ± 17.48 , appraisal skill 70.18 ± 16.75 and decision-making skills was 62.65 ± 16.46 . Among the five mentioned skills, accessibility ($P < 0.05$), understand ($P < 0.001$) and decision-making ($P < 0.05$) are associated significantly with smoking of students. given the importance and role of medical students in the future of the country as well as the relationship between health literacy and smoking, it is necessary to have educational programs and developing them in order to promote effective health literacy skills.

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