Study: 28% of U.S. Adults are Tobacco Users

In the U.S., 28 percent of adults 18 years of age or older were current users of at least one type of tobacco product in 2013 and 2014 and nearly 1 in 10 youths 12 to 17 years of age used a tobacco product in the previous 30 days, with cigarette use being most prevalent. The findings, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, will help inform tobacco control efforts aimed at protecting the health of the U.S. population.

The study also shows that multiple-product use was common among tobacco users, with cigarettes plus e-cigarettes being the most common combination of tobacco products used. For this study, the researchers used data from 45,971 adult and youth participants from Wave 1 (September
2013 through December 2014) of the Population Assessment of Tobacco and
Health (PATH) Study, a large, nationally representative, longitudinal study of tobacco use and health in the U.S.

Smoking is responsible for more U.S. deaths annually than the AIDS, use of alcohol and illegal drugs, motor vehicle accidents, murders, and suicides combined. With recent data suggesting higher smoking-related mortality than previously estimated, the medical community is urged to make tobacco control a high priority.

Furthermore, noncigarette tobacco products are rapidly evolving, and their effect on population-level health is unknown. Use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), cigars, smokeless tobacco, and hookah (waterpipe) has risen sharply in the past decade, and the use of two or more tobacco products has increased in recent years, especially among young adults, the researchers noted.

There was a consistent pattern of higher prevalence of tobacco use with increasing age and grade in school. In general, male youths were more likely than female youths to use tobacco, although for many products, differences in prevalence were small, the team pointed out. Meanwhile, in the adult group, men were more likely than women to use any tobacco product (35 vs. 21 percent) and to use each type of tobacco product other than dissolvable tobacco. Use of any tobacco product also differed according to race or ethnic group, sexual orientation, educational level, income, and region.

The PATH Study uses a detailed assessment of tobacco-use behaviours, the inclusion of biomarkers, and a longitudinal design in a comprehensive effort to document tobacco use. Specifically, the design of the PATH Study will allow for examination of between-person differences and within-person changes over time in patterns of use of existing and emerging tobacco products, exposures and related biomarkers, risk perceptions, and health conditions potentially related to tobacco use.

"Although the findings reported here document the prevalence of tobacco use at the time of the first wave of the PATH Study, longitudinal data from future waves will help answer questions about transitions among multiple-product use, single-product use, nonuse of tobacco, and former tobacco use and, in particular, will help determine whether the direction of such transitions favours one type of product or another," the researchers explain.

Source: The New England Journal of Medicine
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