



The Public Health Impact of CDC's "Tips from Former Smokers" Campaign

The scientific evidence is substantial and clear: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Tips from Former Smokers campaign is an enormous success, prompting millions of smokers to try to quit and helping hundreds of thousands to quit for good. It is also cost-effective.

In 2012, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted the first ever federally-funded national media campaign aimed at reducing smoking. The campaign, *Tips from Former Smokers* (*Tips*), depicted former smokers coping with devastating diseases and disabilities caused by their tobacco use. Studies demonstrate that the *Tips* campaign is not only effective at reducing tobacco use, but is also extremely cost-effective.

- A study published in *The Lancet* estimated that, as a result of the 12 week campaign in 2012, 1.6 million smokers tried to quit smoking and more than 100,000 likely quit smoking permanently. Researchers estimate that by quitting, former smokers added more than a third of a million years of life to the U.S. population.¹ In addition, the 2012 campaign inspired millions of nonsmokers to encourage friends and family members to quit smoking.²
- A 2014 study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that in its first year (2012), the *Tips* campaign helped 100,000 smokers to quit and saved about 17,000 people from a premature death. The campaign, with a modest budget of \$48 million, spent only \$480 per smoker who quit and \$393 per year of life saved. The campaign is considered a public health "best buy" because the \$393 per year of life saved is far below the \$50,000 that is an accepted benchmark for cost-effective public health programs.³
- The 2013 *Tips* campaign, which aired on a one week on, one week off basis for the first 12 weeks of the 16 week campaign also had a substantial impact on public health, generating more than 150,000 additional calls to 1800-QUIT-NOW (there were 353,000 total calls) and almost 2.8 million additional unique visitors to www.smokefree.gov. The campaign's pulsing strategy clearly shows that calls to the quitline increased sharply when the campaign was on the air, suggesting that the campaign motivated many smokers to try to quit.⁴ These numbers likely underrepresent the number of people who tried to quit smoking as a result of the campaign because the number of people who seek help quitting is a small fraction of the people who actually make quit attempts. Previous experience from state and local media campaigns that promote quitlines indicate that at least five to six smokers try to quit on their own for every person who calls a quitline.⁵
- Results from the 2014 *Tips* campaign, which aired in two nine week phases in 2014, demonstrate that the campaign continues to have a significant impact on quitting behavior. An evaluation of phase 2 of the 2014 campaign found that more than 1.8 million smokers attempted to quit smoking as a result of the nine-week campaign and approximately 104,000 smokers quit smoking for good as a result of the campaign.⁶

Research also demonstrates that tobacco prevention media campaigns are an effective way to encourage smoking cessation. A national study of the impact of the Tips campaign from 2012 to 2015 found that exposure to higher levels of Tips TV advertising was associated with increased odds of making a quit attempt in the past three months and increased odds of intending to quit in the next 30 days.⁷

A 2012 study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that anti-smoking ads which feature highly emotional and graphic content, similar to the themes used in the *Tips* campaign, are very effective at motivating smokers to try to quit. Researchers found that both the amount and type of ads seen by New York State smokers affected their likelihood of quitting, with greater exposure to emotional or graphic ads having the greatest impact on quit attempts. The impact of the ads was similar across income and education levels, as well as for smokers with varying desires to quit.⁸

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¹ McAfee, T, et al., "Effect of the first federally funded US antismoking national media campaign," *The Lancet* September 9, 2013. During the 12 week campaign, calls to the toll-free number that provides help to smokers trying to quit (1800-QUIT-NOW) more than doubled and the number of hits to www.smokefree.gov, the government's website offering quit assistance, more than tripled. Specifically, calls to the toll-free quitline number increased 132 percent, or 207,519 additional calls, and the number of unique visitors to the cessation website increased 428 percent, or 510,571 additional unique visitors, compared to the same time period in 2011.

² McAfee, T, et al., "Effect of the first federally funded US antismoking national media campaign," *The Lancet* September 9, 2013.

³ Xu, Xin, et al., "Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of the First Federally Funded Antismoking Campaign," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2014.

⁴ CDC, "Impact of a National Tobacco Education Campaign on Weekly Numbers of Quitline Calls and Website Visitors – United States, March 4-June 23, 2013," *MMWR* 62(37), September 20, 2013.

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6237a3.htm?s_cid=mm6237a3.htm_w

⁵ CDC, Office on Smoking and Health, "Calls to Quitline hit record high after CDC national tobacco ad campaign launch," Press release April 2, 2012. http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2012/p0402_quitline.html

⁶ Neff, Linda J., et al., "Evaluation of the National Tips From Former Smokers Campaign: the 2014 Longitudinal Cohort," *Preventing Chronic Disease* Volume 13, E 42, March 2016.

⁷ Davis, Kevin C., et al. "Association Between Media Doses of the Tips From Former Smokers Campaign and Cessation Behaviors and Intentions to Quit Among Cigarette Smokers, 2012-2015." *Health Education & Behavior* (2017).

⁸ Farrelly, MC, et al, "Promotion of Smoking Cessation with Emotional and/or Graphic Antismoking Advertising," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43 (5) 2012.