



The Voice of Your Customer

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FOCUS GROUPS ADDRESS TOBACCO USE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

The Voice of Your Customer is pleased to release the results from focus groups of African American male smokers at risk for lung cancer. Funded by the Ohio Department of Health, the information gleaned from these activities will help advocates tailor smoking-prevention messages toward urban communities.

Video from the focus groups will be used to teach at-risk, urban, middle and high school African American males about lung cancer and associated health risks.

“Traditionally, smoking-prevention campaigns have not addressed the urban culture and cessation efforts have not been a priority,” said Crystal L. Kendrick, president of The Voice of Your Customer.

“Despite the many prevention and cessation initiatives in effect today, tobacco products of all types are still very accessible in urban communities and many local retailers often sell individual cigarettes known as ‘loosies.’”

Older focus group participants said they switch to generics brands or loose tobacco when their preferred brands are unavailable and they were aware that nicotine was an addiction. Younger participants, on the other hand, prefer little cigars and flavored tobacco products and, thus, avoid substitutions. This group also indicated they think smoking is a normal behavior that could eventually lead to health problems if they did not quit some day, but neither group was aware that tobacco use can cause illnesses other than cancer such as heart disease and stroke.

For the older participants, the cost and availability of tobacco products are proven to affect usage. When preferred brands are not available, participants resorted to generic brands, loose tobacco used to roll cigarettes and/or “shorties,” partially used tobacco typically found in public places. The younger participants seem to prefer the less expensive “little cigars” and trendy flavored tobacco products; therefore, substitutions are not common with this demographic.

Neither group expressed a willingness to use over-the-counter products to try to quit smoking, citing cost, inaccessibility and perceived side effects. They did say; however, that being around non-smokers and going to places that prohibit smoking reduces their tobacco use.

While most of the older participants admitted that smoking was a habit and nicotine was an addiction, many of the younger participants believed that smoking is a normal behavior that could become a health hazard if they did not quit “eventually”. The most common cessation efforts among all participants were will power and partnering with friends. Over-the-counter treatments are not very popular with the participants due to cost, inaccessibility and the perceived side effects.