

EnufSnuff-FirstResponder: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial of a Text Message Intervention for Smokeless Tobacco Cessation Among First Responders

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Why We Did This Study

First Responders, like firefighters and paramedics, use smokeless tobacco (chew, dip) at much higher rates than most people, which increases health risks, especially cancer. Few proven treatments exist for this group, and most current programs focus on cigarette smoking. The research team wanted to test if sending supportive text messages could help First Responders quit smokeless tobacco. Text-message programs are easy to deliver and may fit better with the unpredictable schedules and stressful jobs of First Responders. The study aimed to find out whether a text-based program was practical, acceptable, and useful for this group and if participants would stick with it. Researchers compared two approaches: a text-based program called #EnufSnuff.TXT-FirstResponder versus a control program called “Enough Snuff” that used mailed guides and standard quit messages.

Who Participated in This Study?

The study included 60 First Responders from seven U.S. states, mainly firefighters (65%) and some paramedics (25%). All participants used smokeless tobacco regularly, often seven days a week, and most reported using at least three cans or pouches per week. They were mostly male (98%), white (95%), and worked as professionals rather than volunteers. Ages ranged from 20 to 62 years, with a median age of 35. Most had started using smokeless tobacco in their teens and had been using it for up to 41 years. Participants were recruited through social media, flyers in fire stations, and department networks.

What Were the Results?

Both programs were feasible and well-received. Of the 36 participants who gave feedback, 89% read 75% or more of the messages they received. About 58% rated the intervention as “very” or “extremely” useful, and 63% said they would recommend it to a friend. At 30 days after the program ended, 40% of participants in the text-message group had quit smokeless tobacco compared to 33% in the control group. Among those who completed the follow-up survey, 52% in the text group and 44% in the control group quit. These differences were not statistically significant because the study was small, but results suggest that both programs can help First Responders quit, and the text-based approach may be slightly more effective.

What Do These Results Mean?

This study shows that a text-messaging program to help First Responders quit smokeless tobacco is practical and well accepted. While both programs showed high quit rates, the text-based program (#EnufSnuff.TXT-FirstResponder) may provide a simpler, more flexible option that fits the unpredictable schedules of these workers. The study also highlights the value of giving participants choices, such as quitting

suddenly or reducing use gradually. Although differences between groups were not large enough to confirm with certainty, the positive experience and good engagement suggest that future, larger studies could benefit First Responders by offering scalable, cost-effective support.
