

Characteristics Of Low-Level Cigarette Smoking In A California Hispanic Farm Worker Cohort

E. Rodriquez¹, M. Marois¹, T. Hennessy-Burt¹, M. B. Schenker¹

¹University of California, Davis, Davis, CA

Corresponding author's email: erodriquez@ucdavis.edu

RATIONALE: In the US, cigarette smoking is a preventable cause of death. Hispanics smoke at lower rates than non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks; however, risks of low-level smoking have not been established. This study characterizes low-level smokers and identifies risk factors in a California farm worker population. **METHODS:** MICASA is a population-based investigation of agricultural exposures and health. 620 participants completed baseline and follow-up interviews. Smokers were identified as smoking at least 100 cigarettes and low-level smokers were comprised of those who smoked ≤ 5 cigarettes/day. **RESULTS:** Mean age was 40.9; 55% were women. 68% were Mexican-born, 28% were Central American-born, and 3% were US-born. 76% reported household incomes $< \$30,000$. Men worked 17.7 years on average in agriculture compared to 10.5 years for women ($p < 0.0001$). 32% of men and 8% of women reported ever smoking ($p < 0.0001$). At follow-up interview, 7% were current smokers and 11% were former smokers. 12% of men and 4% of women were current smokers while 21% of men and 4% of women were former smokers ($p < 0.0001$). Smoking status at follow-up showed 69% of men and 92% of women were never smokers, 14% of men and 5% of women were low-level smokers, and 18% of men and 4% of women were regular smokers ($p < 0.0001$). 56% of Central American-born smokers were low-level smokers compared to 45% of Mexican-born and 40% of US-born. In unadjusted models, age (OR=0.97;95%CI:0.94-1.00), gender (OR=1.68;95%CI:0.57-5.01), and foreign birth (OR=1.37;95%CI:0.19-10.07) were not associated with low-level smoking. Low-level smokers smoked fewer days in the past month compared to their regular counterparts (19 versus 26; $p = 0.04$). In models adjusted for sex, low-level smoking was associated with current smoking (OR=2.43;95%CI:1.01-5.82) and working in agriculture for ≤ 10 years (OR=2.78;95%CI:1.04-7.45). **CONCLUSION:** Farm workers who smoke at low-levels are more likely to be current smokers and smoke less days a month than regular smokers. Additionally, low-level smokers were more likely to have shorter agricultural work experience. Future research into the self-perceptions of low-level smokers as smokers or non-smokers would further build on these findings. This characterization of low-level smokers can increase our understanding of smoking behavior among Hispanics and assist in the development and targeting of future smoking education and cessation programs.

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