Experienced effects on well-being following smoking cessation: Findings from the 2020 ITC Four Country Smoking and Vaping Survey

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Abstract
Background and Aims: There has been limited research addressing changes in subjective well-being as a result of quitting smoking. This paper examines recent ex-smokers’ well-being related experiences overall and as a function of (1) duration of cessation and (2) continued nicotine use from vaping. Methods: A sample of 1379 ever-daily smoking ex-smokers (quit for up to 5 years) from the 2020 ITC Four Country Smoking and Vaping Survey (Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US), of which 27.1% currently vaped daily. Well-being measures were perceived changes post-quitting in emotion coping (stress and negative emotions), enjoyment of life, and day-to-day functioning. We also assessed the level of persisting worry about past smoking leading to future health problems. Results: Overall, among those answering all four well-being measures, 51.8% of the ex-smokers reported positive effects and no negatives, but 27.3% reported at least one negative effect, with the remainder reporting no change in any measure. Positive effects were greater among those who had quit more than 1 year prior. The largest improvement (56.3%) was for daily functioning, which showed improvement over time since having quit. Current daily vapers reported similar well-being as those not vaping; however, fewer daily vapers reported worsening ability to cope with stress (10.2% vs. 20.7%). Overall, 84% reported being worried about future negative health effects of smoking, with no clear differences by quitting duration or vaping status. Conclusions: Most ex-smokers reported changes in their well-being since quitting, with more reporting improvements than declines. Well-being improved with duration of time since quitting, but did not appear to be influenced by daily vaping use, but stress coping may be better among vapers. Persisting worries about possible future health effects from smoking may be reducing the experienced benefits of quitting smoking for some.

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