



**Consumers Helping Others Improve Their Condition by Ending Smoking**

CHOICES NEWSLETTER - DEC 2020

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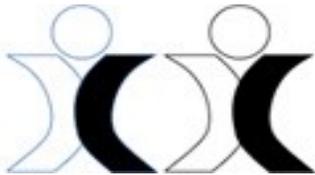
## Online Survey for Smokers

by Lisa Evans

The CHOICES team is spreading the word about an online survey for smokers with a mental health condition who live in New Jersey. Participants are compensated with a \$20 gift card upon completion of the survey. The survey was developed by the Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, New Brunswick to evaluate tobacco quitting barriers in smokers with mental health conditions.

When you participate in a research study, you are helping researchers obtain information that can lead to better medical and psychiatric treatments for everyone. Many of the safe medications we take today are a result of a research study. Right now, there are thousands of volunteers who are participating in the vaccine trials for COVID-19. Without these volunteers, there will not be a COVID-19

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## Vaping Use and Covid-19

by Azeem Sitabkhan

Data shows that teenagers and young adults who vape face a much higher risk of COVID-19 than their peers who do not vape. Among young people who were tested for the virus that causes COVID-19, the research found that those who vaped were five to seven times more likely to be infected than those who did not use e-cigarettes.



“Teens and young adults need to know that if you use e-cigarettes, you are likely at immediate risk of COVID-19 because you are damaging your lungs,” said the study’s senior author,

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## Let us help you to capitalize on the opportunity to quit smoking!

By Cleo Zifovski



Social distancing and stay-at-home policies during COVID-19 can cause a lot of stress and challenges causing people to want to smoke more. Effects of confinement have caused the emergence of disorders such as panic, phobia, health anxiety, and sleep disturbances, especially in people with previous or current mental disorders. This sounds like especially bad news for an individual with a mental health condition who also has a smoking addiction. On the other hand, the good news is that during the novel coronavirus, many more have been thinking about quitting sometime soon, and most want help to do so now. This may be partly because the risk of disease progression in those who currently smoke or previously smoked is nearly double that of non-smokers (Polosa, 2020).

In a new study in Australia and the United Kingdom, 1,204 adult smokers were surveyed. They found the proportion intending to quit within the next two weeks almost tripled from around 10% of smokers before COVID-19 to 29% in April 2020 (Pettigrew, 2020). Thus, this shows the infectious nature of COVID-19 has become a potent reason for

Continued on page 4

## Exposure to Trauma and Smoking

By Azeem Sitibakhan

I've often wondered, what the relationship was between exposure to trauma in one's childhood and smoking? It seemed to me that a lot of people who started smoking when they were younger had difficult childhoods. I did some research and found out some interesting information.

Well, to begin with, despite a decrease in smoking prevalence in the general population, smoking has remained high among people with a psychiatric disorder. This also extends to those who suffer with posttraumatic stress disorder. Studies have found that in those with PTSD, the rates of cigarette smoking and nicotine dependence are three times higher than the general public. Traumatic exposure also significantly increases the odds of having a lifetime of regular smoking. In addition, if a young adult has had a traumatic experience during the past year there is up to a two fold increased risk of regular smoking in that same year.

Why is trauma in young people associated with smoking? One reason is that for those who have a history of exposure to traumatic events and/or the diagnosis of PTSD, nicotine could be used to regulate stress and mood. This is often referred to as the self-medication model. It assumes that substances, like nicotine, are used to regulate mood, negative states, and trauma related symptoms. Research also shows that certain mood states and trauma-related symptoms lead to increased urges and cravings. Trauma exposed individuals who develop the full diagnosis of PTSD smoke more intensely in response to these effects. Many people self-medicate the negative mood states associated with their traumatic experience.

Continued on page 5

## Smoking within the Veteran's Administration's Mental Health System

By Terrance H.

The Veterans Administration's attempt to cope with mental illness and alleviate the anguish inflicted by tobacco addiction can be accomplished with the assistance and guidance of experienced medical staff and peers. I used to smoke, and quit about 9 years ago.



Veteran's Hospital Lyons, NJ

To shed some light on this dilemma, it's helpful to recall events from the recent past. On October 1, 2019, the VA mandated their hospitals and associated campuses become smoke-free facilities. The result of this action, as relevant medical personnel could probably attest to, is that complete enforcement and compliance with the directive was unrealistic. I believe that an abrupt termination of smoking privileges requires a more efficient and effective plan to address the many problems that may arise.

The most intense problems with tobacco addiction and veterans involves those suffering from the most acute psychiatrically severe symptoms that war can produce. Peacetime veterans who have preexisting conditions and trauma from their upbringing where dysfunctional living was rampant, can have potentially latent symptoms made worse by stress and can elicit behaviors not becoming of a mentally stable member of the armed forces.

With stress applied to these individuals, and the condoning of attitudes regarding tobacco use, smoking appears to be a desirable outlet. To remedy the problem, the VA has established a smoking cessation program.

Although I did not attend the program, I thought it proper

Continued on page 7

## Staying Smoke Free During a Pandemic

By Trish Dooley Budsock

Well, this year has certainly been one that most of us hadn't anticipated. As we think about all of the challenges we have navigated, I thought it would be worth a refresher for staying smoke-free during times of stress and uncertainty. These are some very manageable tips that you may have used when you originally quit smoking, and these may be things that can assist you with staying smoke-free, and continuing with a healthy lifestyle.

- Go for a walk. Exercise can improve your mood and relieve stress.
- Take a shower or bath.
- Learn to relax quickly and deeply. Think about a soothing, pleasing situation, and imagine yourself there. Get away from it all for a moment. Focus on that peaceful place and nothing else.
- Light incense or a candle instead of a cigarette.
- Tell yourself "no." Say it out loud. Practice doing this a few times, and listen to yourself. Some other things you can say to yourself might be, "I'm too strong to give in to cravings," "I don't use tobacco anymore," or "I will not let my friends and family down." And most important, "I will not let myself down."
- Never let yourself think that "just one slip won't hurt," because it very likely will.
- Wear a rubber band around your wrist. Whenever you think about smoking or chewing, snap it against your wrist to remind yourself of all the reasons that made you want to quit in the first place. Then remember that you won't always need a rubber band to help you stay with your plans to quit.

Continued on page 5

Online Survey continued from page 1

vaccine. Fortunately, the online survey is far simpler than volunteering for a vaccine trial. Smokers can access the survey directly, [www.tinyurl.com/RUTBS](http://www.tinyurl.com/RUTBS) or go to the CHOICES website, [www.njchoices.org](http://www.njchoices.org). The survey is a series of questions and takes about 15 minutes to complete. To be eligible, you must be 18 years old, a current smoker, resident of New Jersey, and have a mental health condition.

Please take the survey today and help the researchers at Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, New Brunswick learn more about smokers with mental health conditions. Enjoy your \$20 gift card! You earned it.

## Study Seeks Smokers who also have a Mental Health Condition

- Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Department of Psychiatry in New Brunswick is conducting an **online survey** to evaluate tobacco quitting barriers in smokers with mental health conditions.
- **Eligibility Requirements:** Volunteers must be smokers who are 18 years or older.
- **Compensation:** You will be compensated for your time (\$20 gift card).
- **Visit [www.tinyurl.com/RUTBS](http://www.tinyurl.com/RUTBS) to complete the survey or scan the QR code below with your phone!**



Study Director: Dr. Jill Williams  
For more information: Contact Patricia Dooley 732-235-4341  
This study is being funded by the NJ Department of Human Services

Opportunity to Quit continued from page 2

health agencies around the world to prioritize encouraging and helping smokers to quit as soon as possible, capitalizing on this opportunity to reduce smokers' risk of COVID-19. Consequently, the tragedy of this pandemic may indeed represent a unique opportunity for governments and health agencies to help smokers quit, and stay off smoking for good.

Readers around New Jersey can call a toll-free helpline: 1-866-NJ-STOPS (1-866-657-8677) or visit you can use the internet: <http://www.njquitline.org> or <https://www.tobaccofreenj.com> to access free multi-session quit assistance programs.

Pettigrew, Simon. (2020). George Institute for Global Health. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/covid-19-has-offered-us-an-unexpected-opportunity-to-help-more-people-quit-smoking>

Polosa, Riccardo. (2020, May 27). Smoking behavior and psychological dynamics during COVID-19 social distancing and stay-at-home policies: A survey. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7270632/>

## Vaping and COVID continued from page 1

Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, PhD, professor of pediatrics. “Young people may believe their age protects them from contracting the virus or that they will not experience symptoms of COVID-19, but the data show this isn’t true among those who vape,” said the study’s lead author, postdoctoral scholar Shivani Mathur Gaiha, PhD. Researchers recruited a sample of participants that was evenly divided between those who had used e-cigarettes and those who had never used nicotine products. Young people who had used both cigarettes and e-cigarettes in the previous 30 days were almost five times as likely to experience COVID-19 symptoms, such as coughing, fever, tiredness and difficulty breathing as those who never smoked or vaped. Depending on which nicotine products they used and how recently they had used them, young people who vaped or smoked, or both, were 2.6 to nine times more likely to receive COVID-19 tests than nonusers. Among the participants who were tested for COVID-19, those who had ever used e-cigarettes were five times more likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19 than nonusers.

Those who had used both e-cigarettes and conventional cigarettes in the previous 30 days were 6.8 times more likely to be diagnosed with the disease. In addition to warning teenagers and young adults about the dangers of vaping, the researchers hope their findings will prompt the Food and Drug Administration to further tighten regulations governing how vaping products are sold to young people. “Now is the time,” Halpern-Felsher said. “We need the FDA to hurry up and regulate these products. And we need to tell everyone: If you are a vaper, you are putting yourself at risk for COVID-19 and other lung diseases.”

Digitale, E. Vaping linked to COVID-19 risk in teens and young adults. <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2020/08/vaping-linked-to-covid-19-risk-in-teens-and-young-adults.html>

## Smoking and Trauma continued from page 2

Maybe by addressing the issues caused by the trauma, thereby resolving the feelings associated with it, one could better treat smoking addiction. Something to perhaps consider in future smoking cessation efforts.

[J Adolesc Health. 2008 Mar; 42\(3\): 266-274. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2675188/#S16title](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2675188/#S16title)

## Thinking About Quitting?

If you are an adult smoker with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or schizoaffective disorder between the ages of 18 and 70, you may qualify to participate in this study. Participants are paid up to \$100 over 4 months and also receive;

- \* Nicotine patches
- \* Telehealth Counseling



For more information:

Call Dr. Marc Steinberg 732-235-4600 or email [rasmoking@rwjms.rutgers.edu](mailto:rasmoking@rwjms.rutgers.edu)

## Smoke Free continued from page 3

Wishing all of our readers a happy and healthy 2021. Stay safe, stay healthy, and don’t ever give up on your goals and dreams! You got this!



Tips taken from: <https://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/guide-quit-smoking/quit-smoking-help-for-cravings-and-tough-situations.html>

## WORD PUZZLE

B	J	G	M	U	R	E	L	A	H	N	I	L	O	R	T	O	C	I	N
T	H	R	O	A	T	C	A	N	C	E	R	E	I	C	E	U	L	B	I
P	B	R	L	R	E	R	U	T	P	U	R	C	I	T	R	O	A	L	C
R	B	K	W	B	L	R	E	E	M	I	G	S	I	W	Q	A	R	U	F
E	L	N	H	L	N	A	G	A	N	E	O	T	M	X	E	P	T	E	I
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I	N	E	J	I	W	N	I	C	O	T	I	N	E	P	A	T	C	H	Q
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O	L	B	V	N	P	C	T	E	K	Y	L	I	Y	I	I	M	E	A	T
I	G	R	I	E	A	R	N	A	E	S	E	L	E	C	O	B	L	L	E
T	E	A	U	D	N	A	S	U	O	H	T	N	E	V	E	S	Y	L	G
P	L	H	Q	E	D	C	O	O	D	B	E	Z	L	R	A	J	P	S	M
I	B	D	R	L	E	Y	H	R	X	V	G	H	U	L	T	L	O	P	O
R	A	N	Y	W	M	T	I	P	A	V	L	R	S	O	A	O	R	P	N
C	T	C	S	N	I	N	C	N	E	K	O	R	T	S	R	A	P	U	E
S	E	C	I	E	C	E	C	N	L	T	C	V	O	O	P	E	W	I	Y
L	G	Y	V	R	P	V	L	A	R	H	O	I	L	R	P	L	I	A	N
R	E	E	Y	D	R	E	G	E	N	C	L	A	N	E	D	E	V	H	A
P	V	E	S	A	E	S	I	D	S	U	R	I	V	A	N	O	R	O	C

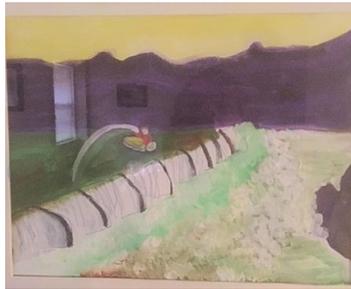
**Find these words: Bonus Word: Stroke**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coronavirus</li> <li>2. Aerosol</li> <li>3. Seventy Carcinogens</li> <li>4. Throat Cancer</li> <li>5. Nicotrol Inhaler</li> <li>6. Prescription</li> <li>7. Nicotine Patch</li> <li>8. Aortic Rupture</li> <li>9. Blindness</li> <li>10. Pandemic</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Nic Fit</li> <li>12. Juul</li> <li>13. COPD</li> <li>14. Moth balls</li> <li>15. Quit Date</li> <li>16. Seven Thousand</li> <li>17. Propylene Glycol</li> <li>18. Vegetable Glycerin</li> <li>19. NJoy</li> <li>20. Blu ECig</li> </ol> |
|--|--|



# Creatively Inclined

CHOICES is proud of our peers who are creatively inclined in the arts, poetry, and writing. Are you an artist, poet, or writer and want to see your work in print? We would love to share your artwork, poem, or story! Please contact us via email at [dooleypc@rutgers.edu](mailto:dooleypc@rutgers.edu).



Deidre from CHOICES, our ‘artist in residence’, continues to expand her portfolio of paintings. Great work Deidre!

## L.O.L! L.O.L! L.O.L!

by Terrance H

- |                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Why do kids hate school? | 2. What do you do if you break your arm in 2 places? | 3. What rock group has 4 men that don't sing? |
|-----------------------------|--|---|

See answers below

Veterans Administration continued from page 3

to give support wherever I could. I have talked to veterans about quitting, sharing my own story.

Life must go on. If a peer or counselor can reach at least one ailing veteran and lead him or her to a life free from tobacco, then all the hard work is justified.

### L.O,L! Answers

All jokes are either original by author or found in A Prairie Home Companion Pretty Good Joke Book 6th Edition

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Because they are board of education. |
| 2. Don't go back to those 2 places.     |
| 3. Mt Rushmore.                         |



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Former: Wayne Holland, Yasmin Halim, Bill Newbold, Eric Arauz,  
Diane Beck

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**The CHOICES team will come to you!** The **CHOICES** team of peer advocates will visit your group or program in New Jersey and provide mental health consumers with education about the consequences of smoking and tobacco products along with information regarding treatment resources available to make quitting easier. Email us [dooleypc@rutgers.edu](mailto:dooleypc@rutgers.edu) to set up date.



*CHOICES is a partnership between Rutgers-RWJMS Division of Addiction Psychiatry, the Mental Health Association of New Jersey (MHANJ) and the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and funded by the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services .*