

Messaging for Pregnant Women



For this month's research roundup, I decided to look at recent papers describing best practice messaging to promote smoking cessation for pregnant women. Although TIS does not deliver smoking cessation, we can still learn valuable lessons about effective health promotion messaging from smoking cessation research and practice.

The first paper (Bovill et al., 2019) tests the acceptability of co-designed smoking cessation resources for pregnant Aboriginal women. Yarning circles with Aboriginal women from different communities in NSW, SA and Qld provided practical suggestions for resource development. Key findings that can be applied to TIS program health promotion campaigns include having messages that:

- are visually appealing (e.g., use bright colours, photos, and artworks);
- champion real stories of pregnant women who have successfully quit;
- use accurate scientific information;
- provide tips on cessation methods that do not include quit smoking medicines (e.g., distraction).

The second paper (Klein et al., 2020) explores how "framing" changes the impact of health promotion messages. The study compared strengths-based messages such as "Quitting smoking reduces your risk of lung cancer," to deficit-based messages such as "Smoking increases your risk of lung cancer." Women of child-bearing age who smoked rated the effectiveness of 10 quitting messages (five deficit-based and five strengths-based). Messages rated as more effective were:

- strengths based;
- specific to pregnancy.

Although this evidence comes from a mainstream North American study, it provides further evidence that positively framed messages can be more effective in motivating someone to quit smoking. It also emphasises the importance of using language and information tailored to the situation and experiences of the intended audience. TIS program campaigns designed to encourage pregnant women to quit should use strength-based messages which emphasise the benefits of being smoke-free to mum and bub.

The final paper (Flemington et al., 2021) is a rapid review of the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who smoke during pregnancy. The authors identify effective strategies for developing health promotion messaging for smoking cessation campaigns. These include:

- using cultural elements such as language, artwork, and music that resonate with the intended audience;
- co-designing campaigns with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to promote ownership of messages and campaigns;
- promoting flexible approaches to cessation that address the relationship between stress and smoking;
- providing education about smoking and quitting to empower women to take control of their quit journey;
- sharing knowledge through storytelling and role models;
- culturally meaningful messaging that focuses on family and kinship, community, country, spirit, spirituality, and ancestors.

This comprehensive review emphasises the importance of using an evidence-based approach that is fair, culturally safe, and community-led, when developing health promotion campaigns.

You can read my more in-depth reviews of these three papers below.



Tips from the 'Which Way?' Study

Include a range of information about available cessation support services in your health promotion materials and campaign. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women prefer information about group support and holistic approaches that include activities like yoga and exercise.

Encourage women to reach out to their local Aboriginal health workers, healthcare providers, and community organisations for cessation support. Provide clear guidance on how to access these services in your health promotion materials and campaign.



Advocate for accessible cessation services within the community, supporting initiatives that address smoking cessation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.



In-depth Paper Reviews

Bovill, M., Bar-Zeev, Y., Gruppetta, M., Clarke, M., Nicholls, K., O'Mara, P., Bonevski, B., Reath, J., & Gould, G. (2019). Giri-nya-la-nha (talk together) to explore acceptability of targeted smoking cessation resources with Australian Aboriginal women. *Public Health*, 176, 149–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2018.08.010>

This study tested the acceptability of smoking cessation resources for Aboriginal women from NSW, SA, and Qld. These resources were developed in collaboration with Aboriginal communities from NSW. The aim of this study was to ensure the resources were meaningful, usable, and culturally acceptable across other states.

Feedback on the resources was collected from 24 Aboriginal women through yarning circles. The women requested that the resources become more interactive, offer more scientific information, and include suggestions for non-pharmacological methods for quitting smoking.

Take Home Message

Tailoring educational resources and health promotion messages for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is essential. It is important to recognise the diverse needs of women from different communities. Aboriginal women want innovative, interactive resources to build their confidence and maintain ownership and control of their quit journey. Challenges with technology, include limited internet access, difficulties with apps and scanning QR codes. These highlight the importance of piloting resources within the community and finding practical solutions.

Key Findings

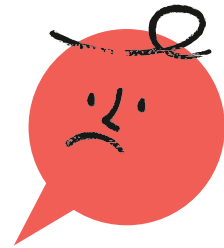
- Bright colours, photos, and artwork attract attention. Resources should avoid appearing too official. This includes using white backgrounds. Opening lines on brochures should be engaging so as to attract people's attention.
- Videos explaining medical content were well-received by participants. Technical issues like internet access and trouble with QR codes did however lead to some challenges.
- Participants wanted to maintain ownership of the quitting process – resources with space for notes and blank quit plans etc were requested to support this.
- The use of Aboriginal art, colours, and photos was appreciated, but using art instead of photos can be problematic. Images of Aboriginal women and babies were thought to have wider acceptability.
- Participants recommended making resources more interactive and innovative, combining multiple brochures into one booklet. Activities to address boredom and cravings were also suggested.
- Phone apps were preferred by participants because of their user-friendliness. Participants supported using waiting room time for education on smoking cessation during pregnancy. Real stories were requested for motivation.
- Participants highlighted a need for more scientific information about smoking during pregnancy, preferably explained through videos or in written form.
- Non-pharmacological options should be provided alongside recommended pharmacotherapy.
- Participants also wanted to see more encouragement and empowerment in the resources.

Klein, E. G., Macisco, J., Lazard, A., Busho, A., Oslock, A., & Worly, B. (2020). Framing pregnancy-related smoking cessation messages for women of reproductive age. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 12, 100290. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2020.100290>

This study from the United States, examined the effect of health messages to help women of childbearing age to quit smoking. Messages were either framed positively, highlighting the benefits of quitting (strengths-based or 'gain-framed'), or negatively, emphasising the risks of continuing to smoke (deficit-based or 'loss-framed'). For example:



Gain-framed message:
"Quitting smoking reduces your risk of lung cancer."



Loss-framed message:
"Smoking increases your risk of lung cancer."

Anti-smoking campaigns often focus on the dangers of smoking (loss framing). However, research suggests emphasising the positive outcomes of quitting (gain framing) is an effective strategy to encourage people to quit smoking.

Between January and May 2019, 135 pregnant women, aged 18 to 44 years old who smoked were recruited from clinics. The women rated the effectiveness of five gain-framed and five loss-framed messages.

Take Home Message

Gain-framed messages tend to be more effective than loss-framed messages. Tailoring messages to highlight the positive aspects of quitting smoking may encourage smoking cessation among women of childbearing age. However, messages should specifically address pregnancy to maximize the impact.

Key Findings

- Gain-framed messages about quitting smoking during pregnancy were more effective than loss-framed messages.
- Three messages were rated as the most effective:
 1. "When you quit smoking, you take control of your own health and the health of your baby";
 2. "Quitting smoking can prevent harm to you and your baby";
 3. "There are lifelong benefits to children growing up in a smoke-free environment."
- The message emphasising *freedom*, "Start living. Stop smoking," was not as effective because it used general language rather than language specifically related to pregnancy.

Study Limitation

This research was conducted in the United States, so it may not represent the thoughts and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Highlights from The Cancer Institute NSW campaign

Cancer Institute NSW ran the 'Quitting Smoking in Pregnancy' campaign to quit from 6 February to 30 April 2023. Campaign content was delivered through a range of platforms including social media (Facebook, Instagram), and women's online networks (Mamamia and 9Honey). The campaign featured pregnant women at different stages of pregnancy, highlighting that smoking is harmful at every stage. The campaign aimed to motivate pregnant women to quit by communicating where to go for support to quit. It was expected that this information would enable pregnant women who smoke to take action and reach out to Quitline or a health professional.

The campaign included a specific focus on pregnant Aboriginal women. Key messages for this priority population were:

- During your pregnancy, no amount of smoking is safe for you and bub.
- Have a yarn with your doctor or midwife or call Quitline to start your quit journey now.

Flemington, T., La Hera-Fuentes, G., Bovill, M., Hart, A., Bennett, J., Ryan, N. M., & Gould, G. S. (2021). Smoking Cessation Messages for Pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women: A Rapid Review of Peer-Reviewed Literature and Assessment of Research Translation of Media Content. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(17), 9341. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179341>

The aim of this review was to identify the most effective approaches for using social media messages to support smoking cessation among pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. There were two parts to this review:

Part 1

Summarised relevant papers using the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model and identified best-practice approaches through two frameworks, the Behaviour Change Wheel and COM-B model.

Part 2

Evaluated existing smoking cessation messages for pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia.

The review analysed 193 research articles and 17 health promotion campaigns and aligned them with the two frameworks. Most campaigns used various media, such as brochures, films, posters, and social media, to reach their audience.

Take Home Message

When developing health campaigns, prioritise clear messaging and avoid overwhelming audiences with too much information. Focus on the content and cultural elements of the messages. Collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the design process is vital to ensure the campaign is culturally appropriate and resonates with the community. A key recommendation from this review is to adopt evidence-based and culturally safe approaches, co-designed and led by community members, to ensure ownership and success of the messaging and campaign.

Key Findings

- Health promotion campaigns feature cultural elements such as language, artwork, and music to resonate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Successful programs like "Stronger Boorais" and "Birthing in our Community" effectively address smoking cessation by integrating cultural elements. They also consider the factors influencing behaviour within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Three major themes are important for messaging for pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who smoke:



Theme 1

Holistic partnerships with women, their family, and their community. This includes using support methods like NRT, dealing with stress, and involving family and community.

Theme 2

Empowerment through knowledge and role models. This involves understanding the risks of smoking, deciding when to quit, and considering a woman's independence and the support of her family and community.

Theme 3

Culturally meaningful efforts. This includes honouring the past, looking towards the future, using language and arts, valuing community relationships, and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Study Limitation

The review was limited to research papers and health promotion campaigns available until July 2019. Newer research articles and campaigns have not been included in this review.

Take Home Message

Prioritising culturally sensitive approaches when designing and promoting smoking cessation resources for pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is crucial. This involves partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, engaging in dialogue during resource development, and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives. It's important to tailor health messages to people, considering factors such as motivation levels and cultural aspects. Providing clear information and promotion about where to seek support and how to access services is necessary. This will help women engage with the support services available, easing their journey to quit smoking and maintaining a smoke-free lifestyle.

