Generation Z: people born between 1995-2010

The trending rise in popularity of electronic cigarettes warrants further investigation into the nature of this behavior. It is estimated almost 1/5 of 12th graders report using e-cigarettes. 1

The college years are often a stressful time of transition for many students, and the establishment of independent lifestyle skills and behaviors is key.

Data trends suggest that lifestyle behaviors developed in college and young adulthood commonly carry over into adulthood. 2

The primary reason reported for electronic cigarette usage was “safer than cigarettes” 3

The purpose of this study was to identify unique aspects of risky health behaviors in Generation Z college students. For this project, the authors specifically explored electronic cigarette use and its implications for nursing and health care.

Nicotine is a known chemical that increases alertness and concentration; a primary indication for e-cigarette usage among study participants included an increased predisposition to boredom and apathy.

The media and advertising industries—coupled with the discrete and portable nature of e-cigarette product design—create a psychosocial target for use and popularity among adolescent and young adults.

A lack of knowledge drives continual use of e-cigarette products, and the switch to traditional cigarettes is likely for users.

A complete nursing assessment of Gen Z individuals should include assessment for E-cigarette use a health behavior unique to this emerging adult population that has potential to shape their healthcare needs of the future.

BACKGROUND

• Generation Z: people born between 1995-2010

• The college years are often a stressful time of transition for many students, and the establishment of independent lifestyle skills and behaviors is key.

• Data trends suggest that lifestyle behaviors developed in college and young adulthood commonly carry over into adulthood. 2

• The primary reason reported for electronic cigarette usage was “safer than cigarettes” 3

METHODS

A qualitative phenomenological research design was utilized for this project. Study population included a purposive sample of Generation Z students.

Individual interviews were conducted with study participants to explore attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge surrounding use and/or consequences of use related to electronic cigarettes.

• A total of 8 private interviews (4 with e-cigarette smokers; 4 with non-smokers entirely) were conducted and transcribed for data analysis.

Data was analyzed using Coaizzi’s (1978) seven-step method for qualitative data analysis.

FINDINGS

A lack of understanding of e-cigarettes exists, both within e-cigarette smokers and non-smokers.

• Participants described greater uncertainty regarding the actual contents of e-cigarettes, whereas they felt more certain about the concrete nature of JUUL products.

Both e-cigarette smoker and non-smoker participants perceive the main association of nicotine as “addiction.”

• When e-cigarette smoker participants were asked about their rationale for continued use, the main themes of “boredom” and “relaxation” emerged. When non-smoker participants were asked to speculate a rationale for continued use, themes of “peer-pressure” or feeling “cool” emerged.

Nicotine can cause appetite reduction as well as lower insulin levels.

• The diet of participants included mostly of “fast-food” and “snacks”

• Report of skipping meals was low

The media and advertising industries may serve as the primary catalyst for the rise of popularity of JUUL in recent years.

• E-cigarette smoker participants explained the popularity of such products as being more “portable” and “easier to hide” than traditional cigarettes.

• Parental discontent of e-cigarettes and its usage was almost unanimous among all participants.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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REFERENCES

