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Financial incentives combined with a smoking cessation group training programme increase abstinence rates in employees: a cluster randomized trial

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Abstract

Objectives: This study investigated whether financial incentives combined with a smoking cessation group training programme organized at the workplace are effective in increasing 6-month abstinence rates in tobacco-smoking employees.

Methods: In this cluster randomized trial, 61 companies with 640 participating smokers within the Netherlands were enrolled. Eligible participants were employees who were current tobacco smokers of at least 18 years old. The control arm consisted of seven 90-minute sessions of smoking cessation group training at the workplace. In addition, participants in the intervention arm received vouchers for being abstinent: at the end of the training programme (€50), after three months (€50) and after six months (€50). 31 companies were randomized to the intervention arm and 30 companies to the control arm. The main outcome was CO-validated continuous abstinence at 6 months.

Results: All randomized participants were included in the analyses. After the smoking cessation programme, abstinence rates in the intervention group were significantly higher (81.8%) than in the control group (72.0%) (AOR 1.96, 95% CI 1.12 to 3.40, $p = 0.018$). After three months, quit rates were 52.3% in the intervention group and 41.2% in the control group (AOR 1.63, 95% CI 1.12 to 2.38, $p = 0.011$). After 6 months, the difference in quit rates between intervention and control group increased to 44.4% versus 24.8% (AOR 2.58, 95% CI 1.74 to 3.83, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Financial incentives on top of a smoking cessation group training programme can significantly increase long-term smoking abstinence rates in employees.