

SECONDHAND SMOKE EXPOSURE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Key Words: secondhand smoke exposure, adolescents, home/car

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine secondhand smoke exposure among adolescents. Little is known about adolescent secondhand smoke exposure, particularly exposures related to home and car locations.

Secondhand smoke exposure is the primary respiratory irritant among adolescents and accounts for increased rates of respiratory disease morbidity.

Method: We surveyed adolescents during a spring sport's physical examination session. The two page questionnaire (questions about household/car exposure, rules about smoking in home, personal smoking status) was completed prior to the physical examination. A convenience sample of 484 adolescents (age ranged from 14 – 19 yrs of age), predominantly African American (99%) and male (65%) participated in the study.

Findings: Preliminary analysis of the data reveals differences adolescent's perceptions of home smoking rules and smoking practices. Discordance between adolescent perception of no smoking rules in the home and smoking in the home was found for 24% of the sample. Rules about no smoking in the home were reported by over half of the sample (69%), while 48% adolescents reported smoking in the home. Almost 2/3 of the sample (60%) reported secondhand smoke exposure in the car, with family members (43%) followed by friends (19%) contributing the greatest amounts of secondhand smoke exposure. Self report of current personal smoking was reported by a small percentage of the sample (6%), though 29% reported ever smoking. Data analysis is ongoing.

Discussion: Although smoking is a major risk factor for the adolescent population, secondhand smoke exposure in this population has received little attention. Preliminary analysis points to the discordance between adolescent's perceptions of home rules about smoking and their perceptions of who smokes in the home. Car secondhand smoke exposure, while not reported previously in the literature, was found to be a major risk factor for this population. This study highlights secondhand smoke exposure patterns reported by minority adolescents, and suggests that population specific, culturally appropriate interventions are needed to curtail adolescent exposure to secondhand smoke. Supported by MCHB LEAH (Leadership and Education in Adolescent Health).