

\$10M Grant to Evaluate Smoking Cessation Strategies Among Black Adults

Researchers will study whether culturally specific interventions are better at helping folks quit smoking compared with standard methods.

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The University of Kansas Medical Center (KU) is partnering with the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention to identify successful methods for helping Black people quit smoking, according to a [university news release](#).

Although [smoking](#) is to blame for many [health disparities](#) between Black adults and non-Hispanic white people, little research has been conducted to determine the effectiveness of smoking-cessation treatment in Black people.

In 2020, almost 20% of non-Hispanic Black adults used tobacco products, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Although most Black people start smoking at an older age, they are more likely than any people of other races to experience related health problems, such as [heart disease](#), [cancer](#) and [stroke](#).

“Despite smoking fewer cigarettes per day on fewer days per month, Black adults are more likely to get sick and die from [tobacco](#)-related causes,” said study co-investigator Nikki Nollen, PhD, a professor of population health at KU Medical Center. “In addition, due to targeted tobacco industry marketing, over 84% of Black adults who smoke in the United States use mentholated cigarettes, which are more addictive, more harmful and harder to quit.”

Research will be supported by a \$10 million award from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), which funds research that provides patients, caregivers and health care professionals with evidence-based information to help make better-informed health care decisions.

For the study, researchers will examine the effects of three treatment options in about 1,500 Black adults who want to quit smoking. Participants will be recruited from metropolitan areas in five cities with elevated smoking rates among Black residents (Bloomington, Indiana; Kansas City, Kansas; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Phoenix, Arizona; and Richmond, Virginia).

According to the news release, the following treatment packages were selected because they have previously been shown to be effective among Black adults:

- The standard intervention will provide four counseling sessions and two weeks of nicotine patches, similar to a typical state-run quit line.
- The intensive intervention will provide eight weeks of nicotine patches, eight culturally specific counseling sessions (participants can choose whether to have in-person group counseling or individual phone counseling) and access to the Pathways to Freedom video (a video designed to help Black adults quit smoking) on the study website.
- The intensive incentivized intervention will be the same as the intensive intervention but will also provide up to \$50 in incentives for participants to attend counseling sessions.

“This multisite trial will be the largest comparative effectiveness study, to date, of smoking cessation treatments for Black adults who smoke,” said Nollen. “The thoughtful consideration that went into selecting treatments that can be accessed in nonclinical settings at no or minimal cost enhances the ability to translate the study’s findings into ‘real-world’ settings.”

Researchers aim to determine whether the culturally specific interventions tested will improve cessation rates compared with the standard evidence-based intervention.

This research “has the potential to answer an important question about what treatments work best to empower Black people to quit smoking and fill a crucial evidence gap,” said PCORI executive director Nakela Cook, MD, MPH, in the release.