

Why Do African Americans Struggle to Quit Menthol Cigarettes?

A grant will fund research to understand the barriers Black people face when trying to quit smoking.

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A researcher from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Public Health has received a \$733,000 K01 career development grant to study the barriers African-Americans who smoke menthol cigarettes face when trying to quit [smoking](#).

The National Institute on Drug Abuse awarded the grant to Dina M. Jones, PhD, MPH, assistant professor at UAMS's Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health's Center for the Study of Tobacco, for her UQuit study, which was founded in August 2022 and will run until 2027.

"It's an honor to get this grant," Jones said in a [UAMS news release](#). "This is a huge opportunity. Also, I'm the first person in the history of this college to get the award.... I'm eager to research factors that predict smoking lapses in real-time among African-American smokers."

More than 85% percent of African-American [cigarette](#) smokers use menthol cigarettes. The UQuit Study will attempt to understand why this population is less likely to quit smoking than white smokers and non-menthol cigarettes smokers.

"African Americans who smoke cigarettes typically prefer menthol cigarettes. But that's not by accident," Jones said. "Research has shown that tobacco companies have used various forms of advertising, marketing and partnerships with leaders in the Black community to intentionally push the use of menthol cigarettes into the Black community."

For the UQuit Study, Jones will assess changes in participants' moods, [stress levels](#) and nicotine cravings as well as exposure to stressors such as [discrimination](#) and the influence of tobacco advertising on their likelihood to relapse.

Jones aims to use this research to devise interventions that help African-American smokers quit and help address some of the health disparities that disproportionately impact African Americans' rate of tobacco-caused morbidity and death.

"If we get people in the study who can successfully quit and compare their traits, their daily

circumstances and how they manage life once they quit to those who relapse, it may help our research immensely,” Jones said.

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