Garden State Equality Tackles Tobacco Use

An Ethnographic Assessment with the LGBTQ+ Community

Presented by: Jill Patel, MPH, CHES
Introduction

- The Office of Tobacco Control and Prevention (OTCP) is housed within the New Jersey Department of Health.
  - OTCP implements statewide evidence-based tobacco prevention, cessation, and policy initiatives.
  - OTCP is currently working to reduce tobacco-related disparities within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) community.
  - To learn more about OTCP, visit [https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/tobacco/](https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/tobacco/)

- Garden State Equality (GSE) is a LGBTQ+ advocacy and education non-profit agency in New Jersey.
  - GSE is an exemplified leader in committing to change, advocacy, and securing the well-being of all LGBTQ+ residents in the state of New Jersey.
  - To learn more about GSE, visit [https://www.gardenstateequality.org/](https://www.gardenstateequality.org/)
Background

- **Tobacco use is higher among LGBTQ+ populations than among the heterosexual populations.**
  - 16.1% of LGB adults smoke cigarettes compared to the 12.3% of heterosexual/straight adults
  - 21.3% of transgender adults currently use e-cigarettes compared to 5% of cisgender adults
  - 17.4% of LGB high school students report using tobacco products compared to 11.4% of heterosexual students

- **Higher rates of tobacco use is seen due to the rigorous marketing from Big Tobacco Companies.**

- **Quitting Behavior in this Community:**
  - LGB individuals are 5 times more likely than others to never intend to call a smoking cessation Quitline

Source: CDC, 2022
Why An Ethnographic Assessment?

- Allows for the observation of people in their natural environments in order to gain a more holistic, contextual understanding of a group’s shared culture, beliefs, and social dynamics.

- Useful approach for learning first-hand about the behaviors and interactions of people within a particular context.
An Ethnographic Assessment within the LGBTQ+ Community: Purpose

• The objective of this ethnographic assessment was to understand the psychological, social, and physical factors that contribute to tobacco use in the LGBTQ+ community in Monmouth, Essex, and Camden Counties.

• The aim of this ethnographic assessment is to answer the following questions:
  • How do psychosocial elements contribute to tobacco use?
  • What are the barriers to tobacco cessation for LGBTQ+ community members?
Methods

• The ethnographic assessment consisted of:
  • Literature Review
  • Media Analysis of current tobacco media campaigns within the LGBTQ Community
  • Online Questionnaire
  • One-to-one Interviews

• Criteria for participation:
  • Resides or works within the selected counties and is either a current or former smoker
  • Identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community
  • Be at least 18 years or older
Methods

• A literature review was conducted to identify and analyze the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

• A media analysis to review news articles, and media campaigns around the LGBTQ+ community and tobacco cessation.

• Thirty-two anonymous, online questionnaires were completed, and nine one-on-one interviews were conducted.
  • The open- and closed-ended questionnaire was designed to gather data on demographics, tobacco use, cessation attempts, effects of tobacco media influences, and awareness of New Jersey’s tobacco cessation services.
  • The questionnaire, housed on Garden State Equality’s (GSE) website, was disseminated via email to the GSE listserv and social media outlets.
Methods

- Nine (9) one-on-one phone or in-person interviews, averaging 20 minutes, were conducted by trained interviewers.

- Interviews were designed to gather information on contributing psychosocial factors and stressors that lead to tobacco use within this community.

- Interviews were recorded and coded.
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS
# Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE/ETHNICITY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/African Americans</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
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</table>
## Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- 94% of the participants utilized some form of tobacco (cigarettes, e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, cigarillos, chew).
  - A majority of respondents reported dual-usage (cigarettes & e-cigarettes; cigarettes & smokeless tobacco).

- Most participants began using tobacco products between the ages of 11-20 years old.

- Most participants identified family/friends as major contributors to tobacco use.

- Participants rated the persuasiveness of anti-smoking media campaigns on their use of tobacco products or vaping on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=not at all, 2=not much, 3=somewhat, 4=very, 5=extremely).
  - 40.6% stated not at all
  - 15.6% stated not much
  - 28.1% stated somewhat
  - 12.5% stated very
  - 3.1% stated extremely
Results

• Only 31.2% were aware of their local Quit Center

• Only 40.6% were aware of the statewide New Jersey Quitline

• Quitting Behavior: Participants utilized assisted and/or unassisted tobacco cessation methods.
  • Assisted: nicotine replacement therapy and individual therapy (15%)
  • Unassisted: cold turkey, vape-to-quit, reading tobacco-related literature, working out, and detachment from unhealthy environments (50%)
  • Both assisted or unassisted: 15%
Results

• **Barriers to smoking cessation were identified and included the following factors:**
  
  • Psychological: depression, anxiety, low self-efficacy
  
  • Social: friends, family, partners, and going to bars
  
  • Physical: nicotine dependency and withdrawal symptoms
INTERVIEW RESULTS
Interviews: Key Results

- **Out of the nine (9) participants:**
  - 5 identified as Gay
  - 1 identified as Lesbian
  - 1 identified as Bisexual
  - 2 identified as Transgender

- **7 out of 9 currently use tobacco products**

- **Major contributors to tobacco product use**
  - Friends & family
  - A sense of belonging within the LGBTQ+ community

- **Quitting behavior**
  - Most of the participants have thought about quitting and have utilized the unassisted methods to reduce their consumption (mainly through physical activity, meditation, books, or cold-turkey quitting)
  - 5 out of 9 participants were aware of their local quit center
Conclusions/Future Direction

• This assessment was the first step in understanding the factors influencing smoking cessation among the LGBTQ+ community.

• This assessment aided in statewide efforts to understand the factors influencing smoking cessation among the LGBTQ+ population in New Jersey counties with the highest smoking prevalence rates.

• The findings will help inform future research and the design of effective smoking campaigns, referral services, and cessation programs tailored to LGBTQ+ individuals.

• In collaboration, OTCP and GSE are working to gather more information to build effective smoking cessation programs tailored to the LGBTQ+ community. The work will involve:
  • Focus Groups with LGBTQ+ individuals to assess factors that influence tobacco use
  • Key Informant Interviews in healthcare/hospital settings to assess gender-affirming care
Thank you!!