

**SMOKING IN THE ED: CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS  
PRESENTING WITH ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS**

*Authors:*

*Robert Partridge, MD, MPH  
Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine*

**Department of Emergency Medicine  
Brown Medical School  
Rhode Island Hospital / Samuels 2  
593 eddy street  
Providence, Ri 02903 Usa  
Phone 01-401-444-6653  
fax 01-501-444-6662  
Correo electrónico: [robert\\_partridge\\_md@brown.edu](mailto:robert_partridge_md@brown.edu)**

**bruce becker, md, mph**

**OBJECTIVE:**

Smoking is the single most important risk factor for the development of acute or chronic respiratory illness. The objective of this study was to identify characteristics of smokers who present to the emergency department (ED) with symptoms of respiratory illness.

**METHODS:** A prospective study of adult smokers ( $\geq 8$  cigarettes/day) presenting to an urban ED for treatment of upper or lower respiratory symptoms. Nicotine Dependence, Motivation to quit smoking, Confidence, Decisional Balance Scale, Risk Perception and Depressive symptoms was assessed on all subjects using validated instruments, and demographic information was collected.

**RESULTS:**

665 subjects were enrolled. Average age was 37.5 years (range 18-80), and subjects smoked an average of 15.3 cigarettes/day. Nicotine dependence was positively correlated with cigarettes/day smoked ( $r=.621$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) and on motivation to quit ( $r=.151$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). On average, subjects were somewhat confident they could quit in 6 months (mean=5.3, 24% extremely confident, 22% not confident). Confidence was significantly correlated with cigarettes/day smoked ( $r= .128$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Motivation to quit was modest; 23% planned to quit in the next 6 months.

**CONCLUSION:**

Smokers presenting to the ED with respiratory symptoms have varying degrees of nicotine dependence, motivation and confidence to quit based on smoking rates. The ED may provide a teachable moment to motivate smoking patients with acute respiratory symptoms to quit.