

The Relationship between Alcohol Consumption and Past-Year Smoking Initiation in a Sample of Undergraduates

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Background: Although most young people begin smoking before the age of 18, the results of a growing number of recent studies have shown a sizable minority of college students initiate smoking while in college. Moreover, the use of alcohol by college students has been linked to smoking initiation in some studies in the literature. Objectives: The purpose of this study was to examine the association between past-year drinking frequency and past-year smoking initiation among a sample of college students. Methods: A total of 1,523 undergraduate students attending a large urban university in the southwestern United States were invited to participate in an Internet study examining college student lifestyles and behaviors. Results: The results of a logistic regression analysis indicated a significant association between past-year alcohol consumption and the likelihood of past-year smoking initiation after controlling for respondent race, the past-year use of marijuana, illicit drug use, and prescription drug use. Conclusions and Scientific Significance: These results suggest alcohol consumption may serve as an influence on smoking initiation among some college students. These results provide additional support to a growing literature linking alcohol use to smoking initiation in college student populations. Additional research is needed to determine the mechanisms that explain this relationship.