

A comprehensive examination of hookah smoking in college students: use patterns and contexts, social norms and attitudes, harm perception, psychological correlates and co-occurring substance use.

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Abstract

The practice of waterpipe smoking (hookah) has rapidly increased in popularity among young adults yet burgeoning research suggests that its use is associated with nicotine dependence and other negative smoking-related health consequences. Moreover, descriptive studies indicate that consumers may hold the belief that hookah smoking is safer than smoking cigarettes. The current study extended previous work by conducting a comprehensive assessment of patterns and contexts of hookah use, psychological correlates of use, co-occurring substance use as well as social norms and health perceptions surrounding the practice. Participants were 143 ethnically diverse undergraduate students at a large urban US university. Approximately half of the sample (48%) reported life-time use of hookah and 22% reported use within the past 30 days. Relative to cigarette smoking, hookah smoking was associated with less perceived harm and addiction potential and higher social approval. Participants who reported life-time hookah use, as compared to those who did not, perceived less associated harm, had a greater number of friends who had tried and approved of hookah, were more likely to use cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol and in higher frequencies and quantities and were at higher risk for problem tobacco and alcohol use. Among participants who were not current smokers, those with hookah experience were more likely to endorse intent to try a cigarette soon. Hookah users did not differ from non-users on measures of trait anxiety, depression and impulsivity though they were more likely to drink alcohol for coping, social and enhancement purposes than non-users. Implications are discussed for public health initiatives to educate young adults about the potential consequences of hookah smoking.