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Focus Groups (2014)

The moderator guide for focus groups was developed by Noel Brewer, Beth Moracco, and colleagues at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. Focus groups were conducted in person with a convenience sample of adults and adolescents (smokers and nonsmokers). Data collection occurred in 2014.

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Moderator guide for focus groups for Communicating the Risks of Harmful Cigarette Smoke Constituents study (Brewer, PI)

Note for moderator

A key goal of the FGs is to gather the language people use to describe cigarette smoke constituents and their health effects. If it seems like smokers think that we are trying to get them to quit, please clarify that this is not a smoking cessation study, and that we just want to know what they think about the things in cigarettes and cigarette smoke.

Greeting

Welcome and thank you for being here today. We really appreciate you taking the time to participate in this discussion. My name is _____ and I will be the moderator for our discussion.

Role

My role today will be to ask some specific questions and to keep the conversation going. We have a lot to cover, so I may need to change the subject or move ahead with the discussion. But, please stop me if you want to add anything or if you have any questions. Our discussion today will last about an hour and a half.

We are fortunate to have some help today. I'd like to introduce you to our co-moderator, _____. S/he may ask some clarifying questions as they come up.

The note taker for today is _____. His/her job will be to take notes during the discussion. We want to be sure to get all of the important things you say.

Purpose

I think everybody who is here knows why we are here, but let me go over it just in case. We are part of a research team at UNC. The main thing we are interested in today is hearing from you, the experts, about your ideas, opinions, and concerns as they relate to chemicals found in cigarette smoke and their health effects. Your participation in today's focus group will help us gain valuable insight on ways to develop and deliver risk messages about cigarettes.

I would like to state that our conversation is being audio-taped to help us remember what is said. You may ask me to turn off the recorder at any time or simply say you do not want to answer a question. Everything said here today will be confidential. What you say will be used only to help us develop risk messages about cigarette smoke ingredients. Nothing you say will be connected with your name. We would also like everyone in this group to keep things confidential, so whatever you say and whatever you hear someone say, we hope that it will not go out of this room. I hope you will feel free to speak openly but also be aware of our limits in protecting your confidentiality.

How to Participate

Today you will be participating in a focus group. This will be a group discussion. It's not an interview where I ask a question and each person answers the question and we move on to the next one. Instead, we'll be putting topics on the table and the idea is for everyone to participate in the discussion with each other. It's particularly helpful if somebody says something and you're sitting here thinking, "Yeah, that's sort of the way I think about it or feel about it" and you share that. We also want to hear from you if you are thinking, "NO, that's not the way I do it. That's not how I think about it." We want to hear both similarities and differences within the group. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

I. Establishing a context for discussing cigarette smoke constituents (10 minutes)

[SMOKERS] All of you were invited into this group because you are cigarette smokers. So let's start with some common ground. Can we go around the room and have you share the story of the first time you smoked a cigarette?

[NON-SMOKERS] All of you were invited into this group because you are not cigarette smokers. So let's start with some common ground. Can we go around the room and have you share the last time you were with someone who was smoking and what it was like?

II. Perceptions of cigarette smoke constituents and additives in general (25 minutes)

What is it about cigarettes that makes them dangerous?

[show image #1]

What about cigarette smoke?

[show image #2]

You just mentioned a few different things, like [list things like tar, nicotine, carcinogens, other chemicals that they mentioned.] Tell me how you think those things end up in cigarettes or cigarette smoke.

[Probe:] Are they added by tobacco companies? Do they occur naturally?

Additives

Just so we are all on the same page before we move on. I want to clarify that “additives” are things that tobacco companies add to **tobacco**.

Now, what are some things that you think might be “additives” in cigarette tobacco?

You might have heard of a cigarette brand called American Spirit. Here’s what they look like. [show image #3]

As you can see in the picture, American Spirit advertises that their cigarettes do not have any additives. What do you think about that?

American Spirit says that their cigarettes are made with 100% organic tobacco. What do you think about that?

[prompt, if it doesn’t come up] How do you think the safety of American Spirit compares to other brands of cigarettes?

Constituents

Let’s now switch from talking about things that cigarette companies add to tobacco to talking about things in **cigarette smoke**. What are some things that you think might be in cigarette smoke?

When people smoke American Spirit cigarettes, do you think the smoke has any dangerous things in it? What things?

Think of things that could make cigarette smoke harmful. There’s the tobacco. And the cigarette paper. We have talked about additives. And burning any or all of these things can make new chemicals. So, which of these do you think make cigarette smoke harmful? What makes you think that?

III. Reactions to cigarette smoke constituents most/least widely recognized from preliminary studies (25 minutes)

Now we are going to talk about the chemicals that are written on this blue card. Feel free to use this card as a reference as we talk about the chemicals.

What do you know about **carbon monoxide**?

[Probe:] What things do you associate with carbon monoxide?

What do you know about **formaldehyde**?

[Probe:] What things do you associate with formaldehyde?

What do you know about **ammonia**?

[Probe:] What things do you associate with ammonia?

What do you know about **benzene**?

[Probe:] What things do you associate with benzene?

What do you know about **acrolein**?

[Probe:] What things do you associate with acrolein?

What do you know about **crotonaldehyde**?

[Probe:] What things do you associate with crotonaldehyde?

[Probe if people know nothing about the constituent:] When you see this word, what comes to mind?

We showed you six things on the blue card. Here is a green card with some more things that are also in cigarette smoke. Take a look at them. We've already talked about the things on the left-hand side, but we haven't talked about the things on the right-hand side.

All of these things on the green card are in cigarette smoke. What do you think about that?

What would you want to know about the things on this card?

Which of these things most discourages you from wanting to smoke? Why?

Which of these things least discourages you from wanting to smoke? Why?

You all seemed to know more about [insert constituent] and [insert constituent], and less about [insert constituent] and [insert constituent]. How did that play into your thinking about which things discouraged you from wanting to smoke?

About how many chemicals do you think are in cigarette smoke? [Prompt if needed: A few, a lot?]

IV. FDA disclosure of brand-specific constituent levels and warning messages (25 minutes)

Here's the logo for the Food and Drug Administration [*show image #4*]. The FDA is now making cigarette companies disclose the amount of these things [*gesture to the green card*] in each of their cigarette brands. This information will soon be listed on a website. What would you think about seeing the amount of these things in different cigarette brands on a website?

[*for smokers*] What would you do if you found out that your brand had higher levels of [*a constituent the group agreed was scary*] than another cigarette brand?

[*note-taker: make sure to note which constituent was stated in the question.*]

[*for non-smokers*] Imagine that you are a smoker who normally smokes Marlboros. What would you do if you found out that Marlboros had higher levels of [*a constituent that the group agreed was scary*] than another cigarette brand?

[*note-taker: make sure to note which constituent was stated in the question.*]

[*Probe on the concept of brand-switching. This is what we're trying to get at.*]

Imagine that FDA created warnings about the things on this [*green*] card. What kind of information would you want smokers to get about these things?

What would be a good way of presenting information about these things to smokers?

[*Probe on different possible channels. TV advertisements, billboards, pamphlets, etc.*]

[*If cigarette packs didn't come up naturally in the previous question*] Here's an example of a current warning on a cigarette pack. [*show image #5*] What do you think about putting information about these things on cigarette packs?

As we mentioned at the beginning of the focus group, we will be developing warning messages about the things on the green card. What advice do you have for us as we begin to develop messages about these things?

V. Closing question (5 minutes)

Is there anything else we have not yet discussed that you would like to mention related to what we've been talking about?

List of images

1. Unlit cigarette



2. Lit cigarette in hand (but not someone smoking)



3. American Spirit ad



4. FDA logo



5. Cigarette pack with carbon monoxide Surgeon General's warning



Blue card

Carbon monoxide
Formaldehyde
Ammonia
Benzene
Acrolein
Crotonaldehyde

Green card

Carbon monoxide
Formaldehyde
Ammonia
Benzene
Acrolein
Crotonaldehyde

Acetaldehyde
Acrylonitrile
4-Aminobiphenyl
1-Aminonaphthalene
2-Aminonaphthalene
Benzo[a]pyrene
1,3-Butadiene
Isoprene
Nicotine
NNK
NNN
Toluene