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Opinions about Smoking, Secondhand Smoke Exposure, and Smoking Behaviors of Freshmen College Students

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The purpose of this project was to assess first semester freshman college students' opinions about smoking, secondhand smoke exposure, and smoking behaviors on a smoke-free campus. This research used an online cross-sectional survey. For two years, surveys were emailed via Zoomerang to all first semester freshmen students at Valparaiso University. Survey questions contained 60 forced-choice or open-ended options. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. A total of 630 students responded. Subjects were primarily female (58.4%) and Caucasian (84.9%). Twenty-five percent of the respondents reported being exposed to secondhand smoke in their environments. Twenty-nine percent were unaware that the campus is a smoke-free environment, 79% have seen smoking on campus, and 25% believed the smoke-free policy is not enforced. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the campus should be a smoke-free environment. Thirty-four percent of respondents admitted to smoking at some point in their lifetime. Fourteen percent (n=91) indicated that they had smoked during the previous 30 days, with only 28% of these identifying themselves as "current" smokers. The majority of the respondents supported a smoke-free environment and believed the current campus policy is enforced. Data from this study will add to the growing body of evidence about college students' smoking behaviors.

Information about the Authors:

Nathan Matejczyk and Nina Tu are senior nursing majors and Michelle De Young and Nicole Arena are junior nursing majors. The authors have been involved in multiple research projects focusing on smoking cessation throughout Northwest Indiana. This project is part of a longitudinal study about smoking patterns in undergraduate students and their response to Valparaiso University's tobacco-free campus. This project is supported by a Wheat Ridge Ministries – O.P. Kretzmann Grant.

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