

6-month effectiveness of the French smoking cessation quitline

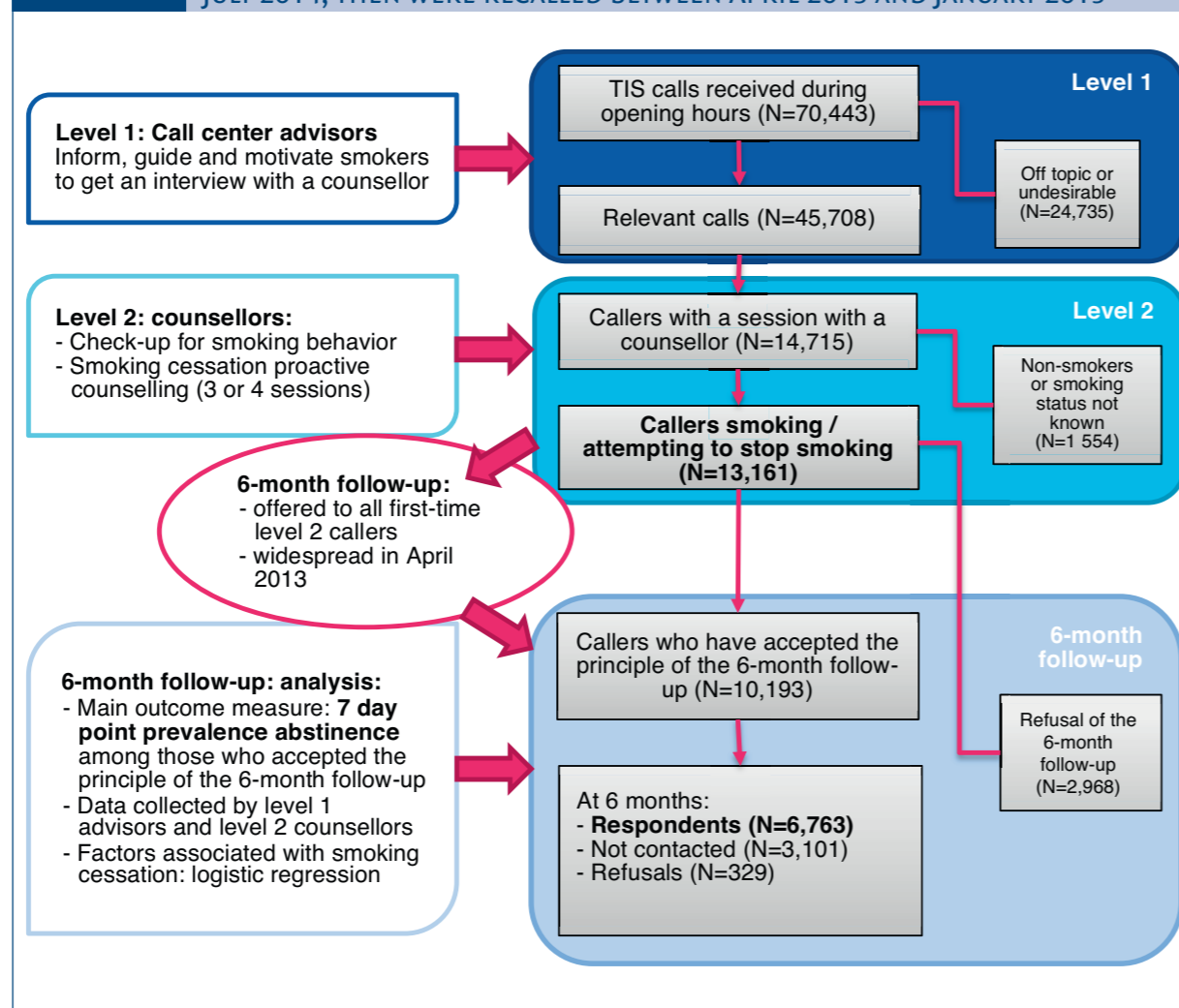
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Introduction

Smoking cessation quitlines are considered as effective interventions for motivated smokers [1, 2]. In France in 2014, 59.5% of daily smokers aged 15 to 75 years wanted to stop smoking [3]. Santé publique France, the French national public health agency, has been running the French quitline (Tabac info service, TIS) since 1998. An evaluation was launched in 2012 following the introduction of structured counselling sessions by trained professionals. Its main objective is to document the effectiveness of the service by estimating the smoking abstinence rate at 6 months.

Methods

FIGURE 1 TIS QUITLINE ORGANIZATION AND TIS QUITLINE CALLERS WHO RECEIVED AN INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH A LEVEL 2 COUNSELLOR BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2012 AND JULY 2014, THEN WERE RECALLED BETWEEN APRIL 2013 AND JANUARY 2015



Results

CALLERS' CHARACTERISTICS

Among the 13,161 smokers who called the TIS quitline and were supported by a counsellor, 19.4% reported they were attempting to stop smoking when they first called. Compared with a representative sample of French smokers aged 15-75 (Health Barometer survey 2014 [4]), people who used TIS quitline were older, more often women, less frequently unemployed, much less often manual workers (4.4% against 31.1%) and more often heavily nicotine dependent.

SMOKING STATUS AT 6 MONTHS

The abstinence rate was calculated using two methods (table 1):

- **R** (rate among respondents): among those responding to 6-month follow-up (n=6,763), 33.0% reported being non-smokers for at least 7 days;
- **ITT1** (intention to treat, rate among the 10,193 people who have benefited from the help of a TIS counsellor and accepted the principle of the 6-month follow-up; people who were unreachable or refused to answer at the 6-month follow-up are considered as smokers): **21.9% reported being non-smokers for at least 7 days.**

The abstinence rates, regardless of the method of calculation, were significantly higher among smokers who declared they were attempting to stop smoking at baseline.

TABLE 1 7 DAY POINT PREVALENCE ABSTINENCE RATE, 6 MONTHS AFTER THE FIRST CALL AT TIS QUITLINE LEVEL 2, ACCORDING TO SMOKING STATUS DECLARED AT THE INITIAL CALL

	7 day point prevalence abstinence rate (%)		
	Total	Smokers attempting to stop smoking	Other smokers
R: among the respondents at 6 months (n = 6,763)	33.0	46.5	29.4
ITT1: among smokers who accepted the principle of the 6-month follow-up (n = 10,193)	21.9	32.4	19.3

References

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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SMOKING CESSATION SIX MONTHS AFTER THE FIRST CALL TO TIS QUITLINE LEVEL 2 (TABLE 2)

After controlling for the characteristics of the callers, the smoking cessation at 6 months:

- is inversely correlated with the degree of dependency;
- is correlated with attempting to stop smoking at first contact with a counsellor;
- is positively correlated to the number of counselling sessions.

TABLE 2 FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH 7 DAY POINT PREVALENCE ABSTINENCE, 6 MONTHS AFTER CONTACT WITH THE TIS COUNSELLOR, AMONG RESPONDENTS TO 6-MONTH FOLLOW-UP (CESSATION RATES AND LOGISTIC REGRESSION)

	%	AOR	CI 95%
Smoking status at first call at level 2	***		
Smoker (réf.) (n=5357)	29.4	1	
Smoker attempting to stop (n=1404)	46.5	1.9**	[1.7-2.2]
Other aid to smoking cessation	***		
No (réf.) (n=5405)	32.8	1	
Yes (n=1356)	33.8	1	[0.9-1.1]
Dependence	***		
None (réf.) (n=547)	38.8	1	
Low (n=941)	37.0	1	[0.8-1.2]
Medium (n=1515)	32.7	0.8*	[0.7-1.0]
Strong (n=1698)	27.1	0.6***	[0.5-0.8]
Very strong (n=626)	21.4	0.4***	[0.3-0.6]
Missing values (n=1434)	40.4	0.9	[0.8-1.2]
Check-up for smoking behavior with TIS counsellor	***		
No (réf.) (n=1002)	38.6	1	
Yes (n=5759)	32.0	0.8**	[0.7-0.9]
Number of follow-up sessions conducted by a TIS counsellor	***		
0 (n=2247)	28.0	0.8*	[0.7-1.0]
1 (réf.) (n=1434)	31.6	1	
2 (n=899)	33.3	1.1	[0.9-1.3]
3 or 4 (n=966)	36.7	1.3**	[1.1-1.5]
5 or 6 (n=552)	37.9	1.3**	[1.1-1.7]
7 or more (n=663)	42.8	1.8***	[1.5-2.2]

AOR : adjusted odds ratio; CI95% : confidence interval

*** : p<0.001; ** : p<0.01; * p<0.05

Adjusted on sex, age and occupational status

Discussion

RESULTS

- Among those who accepted the principle of the follow-up (ITT1), more than one fifth are abstinent 6 months after their first counselling session. Compared to other calculation methods, this one may be considered as the most likely to approach the abstinence rate in routine conditions [5].
- These positive results are supported by the high satisfaction rate observed at 6 months: more than three quarters of respondents answered that TIS had helped them in their smoking cessation process.
- These results are consistent with those observed abroad, notably in the United States [6] and in Europe [7].
- The French quitline seems more effective as a support during a quit attempt, for people probably more prepared to stop, than as a trigger for smoking cessation in people less advanced in their quitting process.
- The association between the number of counselling sessions and smoking cessation suggests a dose effect. This finding should be considered with caution because motivation and readiness to quit, poorly measured in our study, may confound the observed association: the most motivated ones requesting or accepting more counselling sessions, and being more likely to succeed in quitting.

LIMITS

- The effectiveness of the service is here assessed by monitoring observational indicators, with no control group. However, more than 75 randomized controlled trials or quasi-randomized have already proved the effectiveness of quitlines [1].
- The abstinence rate is self-reported with no biochemical validation and may be overestimated.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the French quitline is an effective help for smokers, in particular for those who are already trying to quit when they first contact the service. In order to reduce social inequalities in France, it could be useful to enhance advertisement for this free service among unemployed and manual workers who are currently under-using it.