

EXPERIENCE OF THE TOBACCO QUIT LINE IN SERBIA

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Background: In Serbia, more than 19,000 people die every year due to tobacco-related illness and despite many health and socioeconomic consequences, prevalence of smoking is still high both among adults and adolescents. Implementation of effective tobacco cessation programs, including quitlines, is among most important tobacco demand reduction measures. To support people who use tobacco, Institute of Public Health of Serbia “Dr Milan Jovanovic Batut” (IPHS) established free tobacco quit line in June 2022.

Methods and Objectives: The aim is to present sociodemographic characteristics, smoking history and motivation to quit, expected benefits and assessed level of nicotine dependence of users of the IPHS tobacco Quitline. We performed descriptive statistics of data obtained from 52 Quitline users collected in the period June 2022 - August 2023.

Results: Majority (67%) of 52 tobacco quit line users were female and 33% were male. Quitline users were Serbian residents of all ages (15-82 years old). For most of the quitline users, health related reasons was the main motive for quitting smoking. Smoking councilors support was sought not only by smokers, but also by those who are concerned about the health of close people who smoke.

As the main perceived benefit from quitting cigarettes, 77% respondents indicated health, while 9.6% indicated financial gain. According to the results of the Fagerström test, 38% had a high nicotine addiction, 33% had moderated dependence and 12% low nicotine dependence.

Conclusions: The experience show that smokers as well as non-smokers from all age groups used Quitline and health was main motivation to quit. Low number of tobacco quit line users call for media campaign and other means of promotion to increase demand for smoking cessation support.

Keywords: smoking, tobacco quitline