

EVALUATION of the CD "BE happy without smoking"

by Dr. Jean-François Etter
Institut de Médecine Sociale et Préventive - Centre Médical Universitaire
Case postale - CH-1211 Genève 4
Tél. +41 22 702 59 57
E-mail : etter@cmu.unige.ch

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The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH, Swiss National Health Ministry) has requested the IMSP-CMU (Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine of the Medical Faculty of the University of Geneva-Switzerland) to evaluate the CD "Be happy without smoking". This CD has been developed by Mr. Ariel Haemmerlé, Sophrologist. The CD has obtained financial participation from the FOPH. It mainly contains exercises of relaxation and breathing, based on Sophrology (about Sophrology, see page "Who and What" of the present site).

METHODS

Our evaluation is mainly based on an inquiry with a questionnaire sent to persons who have bought the CD. This questionnaire has been elaborated by identifying the objectives of the CD such as they are presented in the brochure accompanying the CD and in the document with the title "Be happy without smoking" 1) . Among these objectives we find: encourage and help smokers to stop smoking and help them to reduce their desire to smoke. The questionnaire (annex) has been sent by mail in June 2000 to 395 persons, of which 158 had ordered the CD with Mr. Haemmerlé in French and 237 in German. The participants had ordered the CD between September 1999 and June 2000. A reminder questionnaire has been sent in September 2000 to those who had not answered. To grant confidentiality, IMSP has not had access to the addresses of the participants. The questionnaires were anonymous and identified with a number for the reminder.

RESULTS

Participation

We have had 81 questionnaires returned (27 in French and 54 in German), which corresponds to a return rate of 21% (17% in French and 23% in German). The questionnaires have been collected between 1 and 12 months after the purchase of the CD (median delay between purchase of the CD and return of the questionnaire: 6,5 months, 25th and 75th percentiles = 3 and 9 months). The average age of the participants was 45 years (from age 23 to 77), and 58% of the participants were men. 41% of the participants smoked tobacco every day, 12% occasionally (not every day) and 47% had stopped to smoke. Six ex-smokers of 34 (18%) had stopped to smoke at a date posterior to the purchase of the CD. Most of the participants (63%) have listened to the entire CD, 19% have listened partly and 19% have never listened to it, be it because they had not yet had the time or the desire to do so, be it because they had bought it for someone else. Less than half of the daily smokers have listened to the entire CD, but all the occasional smokers and three quarter of the ex-smokers have listened to it entirely (table 1).

The participants who have listened to the CD did so at a median of 3 times. Among those who have listened to the CD at least partly, the daily smokers have done so less frequently than the occasional smokers and the ex-smokers (table 2). Among the persons who have listened to the CD (entirely or partly), 63% have practiced the proposed exercises at a median of 3 weeks at a rhythm of twice a week. Among those who have listened to the CD, less than half of the daily smokers have practiced 3).

Among those who have practiced the exercises, the daily smokers have practiced during less time than the occasional smokers and the ex-smokers, but there was no significant statistical difference in the frequency of practice of the exercises between the 3 groups (table 4 and 5). Among those who have listened to the CD (entirely or partly), approximately half of them answered the question if this CD had encouraged and helped them to quit smoking, if it had helped them to be more confident in their capacity to refrain from smoking and to diminish the desire to smoke, with “a little”, “quite”, “a lot”; or “tremendously” (table 6 and 8). Ex-smokers have answered more frequently than smokers that **the CD has helped them to stop smoking or has reduced their desire to smoke** (table 9 and 11).

Other methods used to quit smoking

In addition to the CD, 37% of the participants have declared to have used another method or treatment to stop smoking at the same time. A much bigger number of ex-smokers (59%) than daily smokers (19%) and than occasional smokers (11 %, $p=0.002$) declared having turned to another method or treatment. Among these methods we find the nicotine substitutes (9 persons), Zyban (5 persons), personal will (5 persons), Acupuncture (4 persons), books (3 persons), Sophrology (2 persons), Homeopathy and Naturology (1 person each).

Languages

There was no statistically significant difference in the answers to the questionnaire between French and German speaking participants.

Open questions

The participants were invited to write some lines on the major qualities of the CD, on its major shortcomings and what they suggest to improve it (table 12 and 14). We received a little more positive comments (45) than negative ones (37).

Among the major qualities of the CD, 11 persons have appreciated the relaxation and breathing exercises, 6 persons have appreciated the musical atmosphere, 5 persons have found the voice persuasive and stimulant, 4 persons have found the language comprehensible, and 3 persons have found that the CD helped to have more self-confidence.

Among the major shortcomings mentioned by the participants, 12 persons found the CD too long and annoying, 7 persons found it too fast and didn't give the time to relax properly, and 2 persons found it too short.

Among the improvements to be made, 5 participants of German language found that the voice should be changed (replaced with a feminine voice or a professional speaker). Two persons found the CD should be more stimulant and two other would want to improve the music.

Some persons also suggested the CD should speak more about the methods to stop smoking.

COMMENT

Numerous participants in the inquiry found that the CD has encouraged and helped them to quit smoking. The participants have particularly appreciated the relaxation and breathing exercises. Globally, the evaluation by the participants of the inquiry is therefore rather favourable.

Ex-smokers have listened to the CD and practiced the exercises more frequently than smokers, and they had a more positive opinion on the CD than smokers. This could indicate that the CD is better adapted to ex-smokers than to smokers. It is possible that these exercises are used by ex-smokers to face the nicotine withdrawal symptoms (such as the desire to smoke), and therefore as prevention of relapse. It could also be that the CD has really helped ex-smokers to stop smoking, but only 18% of them have stopped smoking at a date posterior to the purchase of the CD. The answers of the participants suggest that the CD could be improved by slowing down the rhythm of the exercises and by creating a more stimulant and more interesting content. Finally the voice of the German version could maybe be improved.

The efficiency of relaxation to quit smoking

Ex-smokers were numerous to declare that the CD has helped them to quit smoking. This possibly indicates that the CD is efficient, but it is also possible that the ex-smokers credit the success to the CD without implying that it is efficient. This study is not a randomised test and does thus not allow evaluating the efficiency of the CD. However, the new American guidelines on quitting tobacco present a meta-analysis on the efficiency of behavioural treatments to stop smoking 2). Among these treatments we find "Relaxation/Breathing". The conclusion of this meta-analysis is that this approach is not efficient (odds ratio = 1,0; with 31 groups ("arms") included in the meta-analysis). The tobacco quitting rate for the techniques "Relaxation/Breathing" (10.8%) is similar to the rate of groups receiving no treatment (11.2%)(table 20, page 66 of the guidelines). This CD should be considered as a support to be used in addition to methods which are recognised as being efficient. But this is not clearly highlighted in the booklet of the CD, nor in the document A4 of which the subtitle reads "A pleasant way to quit smoking". Our study shows that a majority of the participants (63% of the total group and 81% of the daily smokers) have at the same time as the CD not used another method or treatment to stop smoking. It can be feared that these persons have used the CD as only method to quit, relying solely on the CD and on their will. Two solutions can be considered: either the CD is clearly presented as an additional support, or the CD and the booklet are modified so to present the efficient methods to quit smoking and encourage people to use them. The recent American guidelines 3) and the Cochrane revue 4) are based on exhaustive meta-analysis of scientific search. They can be considered

as the best synthesis of the actual state of knowledge on treatment nicotine addiction. The American guidelines and the Cochrane reviews should serve as a base to these modifications of the CD and the booklet. More particularly, the phenomenon of dependency and the medical treatment of tobacco addiction (nicotine substitutes and Bupropion) should be explained.

Support of the CD by the Federal Office of Public Health

The existence of a support by the FOPH has largely been used as a commercial argument for the CD. The sentence "with the support of the FOPH"; on the CD could be understood as a quality label, maybe even as a warrant of efficiency. When passing contracts with suppliers or beneficiaries of subsidies, the Office could include a clause enabling it to maintain control on the use of its name and its logo (used on the site www.ah-c.ch).

Limits of this study

We insist again on the fact that this study was not a randomised test and that it does thus not allow to say if the CD increases the chances to stop smoking. Moreover, the questionnaires have been collected at an average of 6 months after the purchase of the CD. This delay has left time to the participants to use the CD, but the answers of the persons who have listened to the CD some time ago might be less valid. The return rate after a mailing and a reminder has been unusually low for a mail inquiry, particularly for such a short questionnaire. However, in satisfaction inquiries, the response rate seems not to be connected with the level of satisfaction (5,6). We have chosen a short questionnaire to maximise the rate of reply, some questions have thus not been approached.

CONCLUSIONS

The CD has been appreciated by the participants of the inquiry, especially by the ex-smokers. The answers of the participants allow suggesting some improvements. However, the meta-analysis of scientific studies show that the "Relaxation/Breathing" techniques are not efficient for stopping to smoke. **It is true that Sophrology does not precisely correspond to these techniques.** Nevertheless, we recommend that the efficiency of this CD be evaluated through a randomised test.

NOTES

- 1 AH-Consulting, Mieux Vivre sans Fumer. 6 pages, non dated.
- 2 Fiore MC, et al. Treating tobacco use and dependence. Clinical practice guideline. US Dept of Health and Human Services, June 2000). Command: Publications Clearinghouse, PO Box 8547, Silver Spring, MD 20907, USA.
- 3 www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco/
- 4 www.cochrane.org/cochranelrevabstrlg160index.htm
- 5 Hall JA, Doman MC. Meta-analysis of satisfaction with medical care, description of research domains and analyses of overall satisfaction levels. Soc Sci Med 1988; 27:637-44.
- 6 Peterson RA, Wilson WR. Measuring customer satisfaction: fact and artifact. J Acad Marketing Science 1992;20:61-71.

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Have you listened to the CD “Be happy with smoking” (the one with a butterfly on the cover)?

Table 1	All (%)	Daily smokers (%)	Occasional smokers (%)	Ex-smokers (%)	p-value
Yes, entirely	63	45	100	74	0.02
Yes, partly	19	28	0	18	
No	19	28	0	9	

If yes (listened entirely or partly): how many times have you listened to it?

Table 2	All (times)	Daily smokers (times)	Occasional smokers (times)	Ex-smokers (times)	p-value
Median	3	1	5	3.5	0.03
25 th percentile	1	1	4	2	
75 th percentile	7	3	10	10	

Have you practiced the exercises shown on this CD?
(only answers 66, persons who have listened to the CD)

Table 3	All (%)	Daily smokers (%)	Occasional smokers (%)	Ex-smokers (%)	p-value
Yes	63	43	67	77	0.05
No	37	57	33	23	

If yes: how many weeks have you practiced these exercises?

Table 4	All (weeks)	Daily smokers (weeks)	Occasional smokers (weeks)	Ex-smokers (weeks)	p-value
Median	3	1.5	4	3	0.05
25 th percentile	2	1	3	2	
75 th percentile	5	3	5	6	

How many times a week have you practiced these exercises?

Table 5	All (times/week)	Daily smokers (times/week)	Occasional smokers (times/week)	Ex-smokers (times/week)	p-value
Median	2	1.5	2	2.5	0.2
25 th percentile	1	1	1	2	
75 th percentile	4	3	2	4	

Among those who have listened to the CD entirely or partly (n66)

Table 6	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Quite (%)	A lot (%)	Tremendously (%)
Has this CD incited you to stop smoking?	24	29	22	22	4
Has this CD helped you to stop smoking?	42	19	15	21	4
Has this CD helped you to be more confident in your capacity to refrain from smoking?	22	26	17	28	7
Has this CD helped to reduce your wanting to smoke?	39	19	22	13	7

Among those who have listened to the CD entirely (n51)

Table 7	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Quite (%)	A lot (%)	Tremendously (%)
Has this CD incited you to stop?	14	29	24	29	5
Has this CD helped you to stop?	37	18	13	26	5
Has this CD helped you to be more confident in your capacity to refrain from smoking?	14	28	16	33	9
Has this CD helped to reduce your wanting to smoke?	33	16	26	16	9

Among those who have listened to the CD entirely AND practiced the ex. (n35)

Table 8	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Quite (%)	A lot (%)	Tremendously (%)
Has this CD incited you to stop?	10	26	26	32	7
Has this CD helped you to stop?	28	14	17	35	7
Has this CD helped you to be more confident in your capacity to refrain from smoking?	7	26	13	42	13
Has this CD helped to reduce your wanting to smoke?	26	13	29	19	13

Comparison of smokers and ex-smokers

Daily smokers or occasional smokers.

Among those who have listened to the CD entirely or partly (n30)

Table 9	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Quite (%)	A lot (%)	Tremendously (%)
Has this CD incited you to stop?	26	30	26	19	0
Has this CD helped you to stop?	57	19	14	10	0
Has this CD helped you to be more confident in your capacity to refrain from smoking?	19	35	19	27	0
Has this CD helped to reduce your wanting to smoke?	41	26	19	11	4

Ex-smokers.

Among those who have listened to the CD entirely or partly (n31)

Table 10	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Quite (%)	A lot (%)	Tremendously (%)
Has this CD incited you to stop smoking?	21	29	18	25	7
Has this CD helped you to stop smoking?	30	19	15	30	7
Has this CD helped you to be more confident in your capacity to refrain from smoking?	25	18	14	29	14
Has this CD helped to reduce your wanting to smoke?	37	11	26	15	11

Among those who have listened to the CD entirely or partly (n61)

Table 11	Daily smokers (average on score 1-5)	Ex-smokers (average on score 1-5)	p-value (t-test)
Has this CD incited you to stop smoking?	2.1	2.7	0.10
Has this CD helped you to stop smoking?	1.4	2.7	0.004
Has this CD helped you to be more confident in your capacity to refrain from smoking?	2.2	2.9	0.10
Has this CD helped to reduce your wanting to smoke?	1.7	2.5	0.05

The major qualities of the CD - Table 12

The participants were invited to express in a few words the major qualities of the CD. We have grouped the answers by category as follows:

Which are the major qualities of the CD?	Number of answers
Good relaxation exercise Practical exercise Simple exercise, can be used everywhere, discrete Breathing rhythm, control of lungs The exercises are relaxing and vitalising Breathing technique (makes us aware how badly we breathe) To learn how to breathe Combination of theory and practice Theory and practice complete each other nicely Simple method	11
Sound atmosphere The music is excellent Pleasant atmosphere, relaxed, concentrated Soothing (3x)	6
The voice of the man who speaks makes us think about many things Calm and persuasive voice Relaxing, relaxation	5
Comprehensible language, not too much of simplification Easy to understand, non-dogmatic Simple in its use	4
Practical, concrete und immediate instructions Clear instructions, real help	3
The confidence that I can stop Reinforcement of the self, autosuggestion	2
The booklet of the CD	2
It is based on Sophrology Introduction to Sophrology, and encouragement for other courses	2
It is first of all a CD of Sophrology which can be used in many other situations other than stopping to smoke. This should be mentioned.	1
Good development of the sequences	1
To exist as a support for those who want to stop smoking	1
It is an additional support	1
Sound quality	1
Well targeted	1
The originality	1
Others	2
Total	45

The major shortcomings of the CD - Table 13

The participants were invited to express in a few words the major shortcomings of the CD. We have grouped the answers by category as follows:

Which are the major shortcomings of the CD?	Number of answers
Too long Boring, no animation, le CD is not really lively Gives the impression to loose ones time from the beginning , trop dull Repetitive. Some tracks are too long Could have some more humour and suspense Risk to fall asleep	12
Too fast, no time to relax conveniently The speaker is too fast Could me more exhaustive. Explanations of the exercises are too short too fast, not clear enough for persons who have never practiced Sophrology Interesting concepts in too short explanations Exercises cannot be interrupted, are too short Rhythm of speech unpleasant	7
Too short	2
Background music is boring Background music	2
Some prior knowledge in Sophrology would be better	1
The CD pretends it is possible to stop only with the CD. Rather illusory as Nicotine is a drug and not psychic. Deficit	1
The aspect "refrain from smoking" is not enough developed	1
Exercises are not always easy. One has sometimes to fight to get the energy to practice	1
Must isolate for listening and practicing	1
Too much preaching and implied threat	1
Voice too loud	1
Suspense	1
Esoteric	1
A little complicated	1
Has not touched me	1
Weakens, no continuation	1
Written instructions could be more complete	1
Others	1
Total	37

What the participants propose to improve the CD - Table 14

The participants were invited to express in a few words what they think could be done to improve the CD. We have grouped the answers by category as follows:

What do you propose to improve the CD?	Number of answers
Female voice Voice softer Tone of voice becomes boring Professional speaker (syntax, mispronunciations which make me angry) Speaker with trained voice	5
Bring more suspense	2
Better music	2
Explain more why not to smoke	1
There should be a follow up, maybe in groups of motivation where there is mutual support	1
A good promotion in fitness or relaxation centres, schools a a continued evaluation	1
Internet access	1
Add a piece of instrumental music at the end to simply relax, empty and integrate the exercises	1
More practice	1
Images, countryside (on computer)	1
A CD you can listen to while working, in the car, preparing dinner, walking, etc.	1
Add other contents (witnesses, physical exercises), book with images	1
Better present the exercises Produce CD so that text is a direct instruction to practice - Simultaneous	1
Video for breathing exercises	1
A document with more accompanying explanations	1
Not so long, one would listen more often, or 1 long + 1 short version	1
Talk about Zyban and Nicotinell	1
Not repeat introduction of exercises	1
More exercises to activate self-confidence More hints	1
Planning of practice (when listen to what)	1
Others	9
Total	35