
**Midlife and older smokers: who is less likely to engage in follow up
in a smoking cessation clinical trial?**

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Tobacco smoking contributes to and worsens many chronic diseases of aging. Despite the long-standing and adverse effects of smoking, quitting at an advanced age can lead to improved longevity and quality of life. Research is sparse on older adults who drop out of cessation treatment or are lost to follow up. The present study assessed predictors of non-completion of 6-month follow-up among smokers aged 50+ in a New York State smoking cessation trial (N=1975). At baseline participants completed a questionnaire on smoking behavior, health status, and demographics, and were randomized to Usual Care, Mailings, or Tele-Counseling/quit line. At 6 months, 321 participants did not engage in follow up (Non-Completers). Of the 321 participants, 98 actively refused follow up (Refusers). The 2 definitions were used to capture data on both passive and active refusers. Bivariate and logistic regression analyses were performed to assess associations between baseline attributes and likelihood of non-completion/ refusal. Non-completion was linked to difficulty not smoking in places where prohibited, being White and male, belief that one's self-care ability was inferior to one's peers, and assignment to Tele-Counseling rather than Usual Care. Active Refusal was associated with having a 1st ever quit attempt, trouble refraining from smoking in where forbidden, and a desire to continue smoking due to perceived calming effects. Logistic regressions assessed predictors of non-completion, male non-completion, female non-completion, and active refusal. Most of the variance in non-completion was due to number of years smoked, being male, and trouble refraining from smoking where forbidden. Male non-completion was predicted by trouble refraining from smoking in places where forbidden and assignment to Tele-counseling as opposed to Usual Care. The probability of female non-completion was linked to number of years smoked. Active refusal was predicted by trouble not smoking where forbidden and having a first quit attempt. Midlife and older male smokers may be especially vulnerable to being lost to follow up. Consideration of these predictors may be instrumental in reducing the likelihood of dropout or attrition from smoking cessation studies targeting older smokers.