ABSTRACT

Title:

Smoking and neighbourhood: an exploratory study of young women’s experience of stigma in Montreal.

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Abstract:

Overall smoking rates have declined; nevertheless social inequalities increasingly differentiate smoking behaviour. The highest prevalence of smoking is concentrated among the poorest populations. In Montreal, smoking rates vary from 16% to 36% depending on the neighbourhood. Spatial inequalities in smoking can be explained by individual and environmental factors. Social norms at the neighbourhood level represent one of the explanation about how people and places interact and shape smoking practices. Social norms have changed since the introduction of legislations to ban smoking in public spaces, contributing to the de-normalization of smoking and subsequent stigmatization of smokers. We know that women are more vulnerable to smoking-related stigmatization, however what is not well understood is the relation between neighbourhood deprivation and these experiences. In this study we ask how young women living in neighbourhoods of differing levels of deprivation experience smoking-related stigma. Theoretically, we draw Pearce et al.’s (2012) model of pathways linking area deprivation and smoking. We employ a comparative qualitative research design driven by individual semi-structured interviews. Participants, aged 21-28, were recruited from an existing cohort (i.e. Interdisciplinary Study of Inequalities in Smoking). All participants were regular smokers, half of whom lived in Montreal neighbourhoods classified as high deprivation and the other half living in the least deprived neighbourhoods. Findings reveal how elements of neighbourhood deprivation shape the way people smoke in the neighbourhood, which in turn influences how women experiences stigma related to smoking. Findings contribute to a better understanding of how deprivation shapes patterns in health inequalities.

Keywords:

Neighbourhood deprivation, Smoking, Stigma