AN INNOVATIVE SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAM USING FACEBOOK
REACHING 7'000 SWISS SMOKERS

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Background
Tobacco smoking causes multiple diseases, premature mortality and is a major public health threat. In Switzerland, smoking prevalence is high (25%) but stable since 2011. Half of smokers want to quit but they underuse effective smoking cessation services. Programs using social networks are a new smoking cessation approach potentially able to reach many smokers. We designed, implemented and tested an innovative large-scale smoking cessation program using Facebook for 7 months in 2016 in 6 states of Switzerland.

Design / Methods
7008 smokers were enrolled within 2 months through Facebook advertising. The program created 6 communities of smokers in each state interacting on a Facebook page. 2400 Facebook publications, which triggered 67000 comments, stimulated interaction.

After providing information and advice in a 3-week preparation phase, all participants quit smoking together on 21 March 2017. Then, they received mutual support from peers and professional help daily during 6 months. Professional support included 3 levels: community managers watching and regulating the activity; counsellors providing personalised smoking cessation counselling; physicians providing personalised counselling for complex and medical issues. Personalised counselling at 2nd and 3rd levels included help for cessation plans, relapse prevention strategies and use of nicotine replacement.

Evaluation surveys were conducted at 1 week, 3 and 6 months among 1270 participants to collect information about self-reported smoking behaviour, use and opinions of the program. Response rate to the 3 surveys was 37%.

Results
81% of participants attempted to stop smoking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smoking behaviour</th>
<th>3 months (%)</th>
<th>6 months (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous smoking abstinence</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cessation with occasional smoking</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking reduction</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable behaviour change</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>62.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Smoking cessation was not associated with socio-demographic factors. The community dynamics, a strong intention to quit and use of relapse prevention strategies predicted success. High nicotine dependence, exposure to smokers and negative affect were negative predictors.

Conclusion
A large-scale smoking cessation program using Facebook, providing mutual support and professional help seems effective to reach large numbers of smokers, stimulate smoking cessation attempts and promote smoking abstinence at 6 months. Clinical trials should assess the effectiveness of smoking cessation programs using social networks.

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