

A Little More Walking Leads to Less Smoking in Finland



By Ruth Kava — August 16, 2016



One of the hardest addictions to break is smoking — but it can be done. There is a myriad of aids to help smokers who want to quit, such as nicotine replacement patches and lozenges, e-cigarettes, and snus. A new [report](#) [1] from Finland suggests that in addition to these, increasing the distance a smoker has to walk to obtain his or her cigarettes is associated with an increased rate of quitting.

Dr. Anna Pulakka from the University of Turku, Turku, Finland and colleagues used data from 2 prospective cohort studies which included over 60,000 participants, of whom about 8300 were current smokers and about 12,000 were ex-smokers when the respective studies began. The study was published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Basically, the researchers ascertained the position of the participants' residences, that of the nearest tobacco outlet, and at two time points noted any changes in the distance between residence and outlet. They then analyzed whether an increase in the distance between home and tobacco outlet was significantly associated with a participant's likelihood of quitting smoking; or in the case of ex-smokers, whether or not they returned to smoking.

They found that an increase in the distance between home and outlet of 528 meters (about 1/3 of a mile) was associated with a 57 percent increased chance of smoking cessation for smokers. Such an increase was not associated with relapse to smoking for ex-smokers.

Although these data are robust, they cannot necessarily be generalized to other populations in other countries. Finland has strict anti-smoking policies, and thus the availability of tobacco may be less than in countries with more relaxed regulations of tobacco.

While this is true, these results suggest yet another factor that should be included when possible in investigations in other countries. If decreasing the availability of tobacco products could accelerate smokers' motivation to quit, such results would certainly benefit public health.

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[1] <http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=2543750>