In November 2005, the Centre for Health Research and Psycho-oncology (CHeRP) contracted the Hunter Research Foundation (HRF) to undertake a telephone survey with randomly selected smokers in NSW to (1) obtain consent from smokers to participate in a randomised control trial (RCT) regarding smoking cessation (2) collect baseline information relating to their smoking habits and history and (3) randomly allocate smokers into control or intervention groups. Participants who provided consent at baseline stage agreed to undertake subsequent surveys at four months, seven months and 13 months after their initial interview.

The study aimed to evaluate the costs and benefits of taking a telemarketing approach to recruiting smokers into telephone counselling for smoking cessation. The benefits of the telemarketing approach were measured in terms of cessation rates at four, seven and 13 months after recruitment. The costs were measured primarily from the service provider's perspective (i.e. Quitline Australia). The HRF recruited all participants and followed them up at regular intervals. Once recruited, the response rates were above 90%. Results from the study were used to evaluate the costs and benefits of telephone counselling against other support strategies for smoking cessation.

“High standard of interviewing, resulting in high response rates and retention rates.”

**METHODOLOGY / SKILLS**

The survey was conducted by HRF using a Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system to guide the telephone interviewer through the questionnaire, identifying appropriate skips and branching to additional questions as required. The HRF developed the random allocation protocol of participants into the intervention or control arms of the study and maintained the equal distribution of same. At the conclusion of the data collection period, approximately 1,245 interviews had been completed per stage, with an approximate response rate of 97 per cent.

**HRF PROJECT CONTACT**

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