

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR: ADULTS ASKING ADOLESCENTS TO LIGHT CIGARETTES: PARENTAL PROMPTING OF ADOLESCENT SMOKING AMONG FILIPINO AMERICANS

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Dear Editor:

Filipino Americans are the fastest growing and second largest Asian American nationality group in the United States,<sup>1</sup> and have some of the highest adolescent smoking rates<sup>2</sup> compared to other ethnic or Asian American nationality groups. We analyzed data from a small sample of Filipino American families ( $N=54$  parent-adolescent pairs) in Southern California to examine whether Filipino American parents may inadvertently increase their adolescent's risk of smoking cigarettes by asking them to light cigarettes on their behalf. Understanding factors that contribute to the high rates of adolescent smoking in this understudied, racial/ethnic minority population of Filipino Americans can help reduce future tobacco-related disease burdens for this group.

The mean age of adolescent respondents was 16.43 years and 52.63% were girls. The adolescent ever-smoking rate was 18.51%. Nearly 13% of the adolescents reported having been asked to light a cigarette by an adult. Among these adolescents, 57.14% had smoked a cigarette, compared to only 12.77% of those who had never been asked to light a cigarette by an adult. Thus, adolescents who had been asked to light a cigarette for an adult were 9.11 (95% CI: 1.62–51.13;  $P=.012$ ) times more likely to have ever smoked a cigarette compared to those who had never been asked.

These findings suggest that such parental prompting of cigarette smoking behavior is a significant risk factor for adolescent smoking and may contribute to the high Filipino smoking rates reported by others.<sup>2</sup> Very few studies have examined this phenomenon and those were primarily school-based surveys among mostly Hispanics/Latinos in San Diego<sup>3</sup> and Tijuana, Mexico.<sup>4</sup> While our findings are aligned with results of these previous studies, to our knowledge, no reports have studied the effect of parental prompting of cigarette

smoking from a non-Hispanic/Latino, community-based sample.

In traditionally collectivistic cultures, which are generally more likely to be heavily patriarchal in nature (eg, Filipino culture),<sup>5</sup> it may be reasonable to expect that parental influences take on added significance. Thus, the effect of parents from such cultures asking their adolescents to light cigarettes for them can be a strong influence. While these findings may be evident to the scientific community, it is likely that tailored smoking prevention programs for some ethnic groups could benefit by emphasizing the need for parents not to ask their children to light cigarettes for them. Future research using prospective longitudinal designs could examine this understudied phenomenon for Filipino Americans and other ethnic groups.

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