



Smoking and HIV in Black Adults

A \$4.7 million grant will help test a mobile app.

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Can a mobile health app help Black adults living with HIV quit smoking and manage their stress? Scientists from the University of Houston (UH) Health Research Institute are using a \$4.7 million grant to test just such an app, according to a UH news release.

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities grant will support a randomized control trial with more than 300 Black smokers with HIV to test the benefits of a mobile health app developed to help users quit smoking and better manage their stress and chronic diseases.

“Our results will fuel the expansion of culturally tailored mobile health interventions, offering innovative, accessible support for those most in need,” says grant recipient Lorra Garey, PhD, a research associate professor in the Department of Psychology at the university and an affiliate of the UH Health Research Institute.

As of 2022, nearly 105,400 people were living with HIV in Texas, according to AIDSVu.org, an interactive site that maps and visualizes national HIV data. By race, Black folks account for almost 30% of new HIV diagnoses in the state.

Even with good treatment, people living with HIV have higher rates of certain lung diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis, causes blockage of airflow and makes breathing more difficult. COPD risk increases with age, and cases are rising among HIV-positive people as they live longer. Chronic inflammation and a higher smoking rate contribute to the elevated risk.

In 2018, about 19.2% of the Texas population smoked cigarettes, and 25% of those smokers were Black, according to a study published in the National Library of Medicine. What’s more, although the smoking rate of Black Americans in Texas is high, they represented only about 18% of the calls to the Texas Tobacco Quitline.

Black smokers with HIV struggle to quit and manage their HIV because of issues pertaining to HIV stigma, discrimination and racism-related stress, note the UH researchers.

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