Bridging Quantitative & Qualitative Methods in Tobacco Control Research

Tobacco companies are currently shifting their strategies for marketing and product development to find entry points for their smokeless tobacco products, such as “snus.” Many of these strategies are the result of inconclusive evidence pointing to a decrease in cancer risks associated with Swedish studies of snus. The controversy around the inconclusive evidence has spurred debate of harm reduction in tobacco control. However, this debate has not adequately addressed smokers’ perceptions about smokeless tobacco, or their perceptions of harm reduction. We do not know, for instance, if the decision to use tobacco alternatives is based on perceived cancer risk, product appeal, marketing, economics, convenience, social acceptability, or a combination of these factors. This lack of knowledge in tobacco control led UCI Epidemiologist, Dr David Timberlake (PI), to propose an in-depth qualitative study, using a focus group format, to better access smokers’ perceptions of smokeless tobacco products, their receptivity to harm reduction, and understanding of cancer risks related to these new products. Mojgan (“Mo”) Sami, an experienced qualitative researcher and focus group moderator, joined Dr Timberlake in the study. Together, they bridged a theoretical and methodological gap between “quantitative” and “qualitative” approaches to research design in tobacco control. This innovative inter-disciplinary study has yielded some surprising results.

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Mojgan ("Mo") Sami, MA, CKM, is a 3rd year PhD student at UCI's School of Social Ecology studying the nexus between urban planning and public health. Specifically, her research is focused on institutional change and urban health governance. Mo has over 20 years of experience working in social and economic development, having held positions at the Peace Corps, World Bank and the World Health Organization’s Center for Health Development. She has lived and worked all over the world in the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Mo believes that health is an important entry point for social change, and continues to accept worthwhile projects while completing her doctorate. In fact, she has just returned from an assignment in Malaysia and Sri Lanka, working on behalf of the Women’s Health Rights and Advocacy Partnership (WHRAP). As a researcher, Mo specializes in qualitative approaches to deepen understanding on health and social inequities.

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**Also telecast to first floor Conference Room at Grunigen Medical Library, Bldg. 22A at UCI-MC**