

# Systematic review of the prevalence of current smoking among hospitalized COVID-19 patients in China: could nicotine be a therapeutic option?

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## Abstract

The effects of smoking on Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) are currently unknown. The purpose of this study was to systematically examine the prevalence of current smoking among hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in China, considering the high-population smoking prevalence in China (26.6%). A systematic review of the literature (PubMed) was performed on April 1. Thirteen studies examining the clinical characteristics of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in China and presenting data on the smoking status were found. The pooled prevalence of current smoking from all studies was calculated by random-effect meta-analysis. To address the possibility that some smokers had quit shortly before hospitalization and were classified as former smokers on admission to the hospital, we performed a secondary analysis in which all former smokers were classified as current smokers. A total of 5960 patients were included in the studies identified. The current smoking prevalence ranged from 1.4% (95% CI 0.0-3.4%) to 12.6% (95% CI 10.6-14.6%). An unusually low prevalence of current smoking was observed from the pooled analysis (6.5%, 95% CI 4.9-8.2%) as compared to population smoking prevalence in China. The secondary analysis, classifying former smokers as current smokers, found a pooled estimate of 7.3% (95% CI 5.7-8.9%). In conclusion, an unexpectedly low prevalence of current smoking was observed among patients with COVID-19 in China, which was approximately 1/4th the population smoking prevalence. Although the generalized advice to quit smoking as a measure to reduce health risk remains valid, the findings, together with the well-established immunomodulatory

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