Abstract:

This project examines tobacco product and information and misinformation in traditional and emerging media and how exposure to this information alters beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and tobacco use. Specifically, this project will: (1) characterize “opportunities for exposure” to the mix of anti- and pro-tobacco product and tobacco use information as it occurs naturally in traditional and emerging social media over a 36-month period; through extensive electronic monitoring and machine-implemented coding, objectively describe the specific themes and regulatory topics to which audiences are being exposed, and (2) examine how opportunities for exposure as well as self-reported exposure to such content affects beliefs, attitudes, intentions and tobacco use behaviors among youth and young adults (ages 13-25) through nationally representative monthly telephone surveys and 6 month follow-up surveys over the same period (N=10,800). Project 1 directly addresses FDA’s research priorities to understand: (1) the nature and extent of tobacco product discussions in nontraditional venues such as social networking sites and how these modes of communication impact tobacco use and (2) how tobacco industry marketing through social media campaigns and other nontraditional communication strategies influences tobacco use in vulnerable populations. Findings generated from this project will inform the FDA’s efforts to communicate effectively about tobacco products by: (a) developing and validating tools to monitor the traditional and emerging communication environment, and (b) providing evidence about the circumstances in which misinformation in that environment affects beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Ultimately, this will enable the FDA to know when it is important to act to counter misinformation versus when to ignore misinformation.