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Cytisine versus Nicotine for Smoking Cessation

TO THE EDITOR: Walker et al. (Dec. 18 issue)¹ describe the use of cytisine, as compared with nicotine, for smoking cessation. Although cytisine is perceived as a novelty in the West, it has been used in daily medical practice in Poland for more than 50 years.² In 1976, the first English-language study on the use of cytisine in Poland was published, based on the observations of 1968 patients.³ Cytisine is currently undergoing a renaissance in Poland. Two Polish studies — a cohort study conducted in 2003 through 2005⁴ and a randomized, controlled trial conducted in 2006 through 2010⁵ — showed the safety and effec-

tiveness of the drug. In 2012, a Polish generic drug company broke the monopoly by introducing a new cytisine product, Desmoxan. Cytisine is very inexpensive in Poland, costing under \$20 for full treatment. Its consumption has grown by factor of 10 since 2000 (Fig. 1). In 2013 alone, after cytisine became available over the counter and was heavily advertised, sales of the drug doubled. The use of cytisine is widespread, and it is considered to be safe by medical professionals and consumers. It seems that the use of cytisine is a major factor behind the decline in smoking in Poland — in the past 2 years, 500,000 smokers have quit.⁶ It is certainly desirable for this success to be replicated elsewhere.

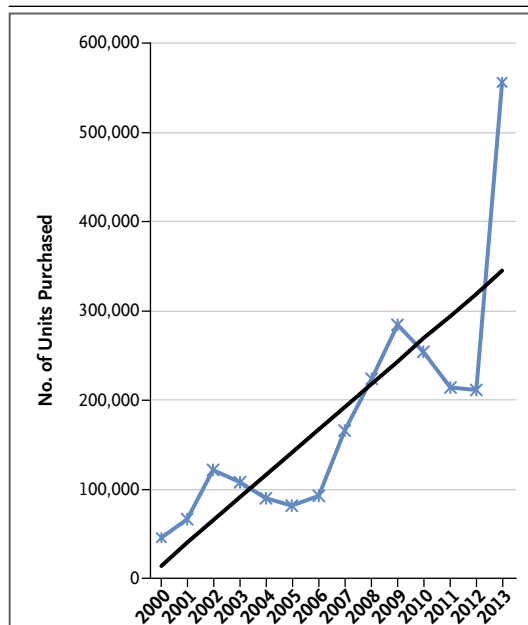


Figure 1. Total Units of Cytisine Purchased as Smoking-Cessation Therapy in Poland, 2000–2013.

Each unit (or package) of cytisine is one full treatment for smoking cessation. The solid black line indicates the trend in sales between 2000 and 2013.

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