

Knowledge and attitude pertaining to cigarette smoking among medical students of Rawalpindi Medical College, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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Objective: To assess knowledge and attitude regarding cigarette smoking among medical students of Rawalpindi Medical College.

Methodology: Of total 975 medical students included in this descriptive cross-sectional study, 30.7% were males while 69.3% were females. 234 students were smokers. Data were collected by using structured questionnaire regarding smoking history of samples and family members, smoking on offer of a cigarette by best friend, discussion of detrimental health effects of cigarette smoking of samples and perception of medical students about role of healthcare providers in arresting smoking in the communities.

Results: Fathers of 16% medical students were found to be smokers while injurious health effects

of smoking were conversed by the family of 61% of respondents. 3.7% students had all their friends indulged in smoking. 728 (84%) students refused to indulgence in smoking on offer by their best friends. 555 (70.5%) students acknowledged the impact of health professional's advice in smoking cessation. 523 (88.3%) students affirmed specific training of health professionals for smoking cessation.

Conclusion: Smoking habit and beliefs of family members is influential in endorsing smoking. Health professionals should participate in abolishing smoking tradition in our community. (Rawal Med J 2014;39:386-388).

Keywords: Knowledge, attitude, healthcare providers, smoking cessation.

INTRODUCTION

Smoking is one of the most pressing health problems, which is man's self inflicting voluntary behavior as costly, debilitating and lethal, yet resistant to treatment. Of the different types of smoking, cigarette smoking is most hazardous than others. Its association in the causation of carcinoma of lung as well as in the cardiovascular diseases is well known. One strong influence is smoking among friends or in the home, as well as personal characteristics such as curiosity, rebelliousness or as assertion of independence.¹

The World No Tobacco Day- 31 May 2014, highlighted that the global tobacco epidemic kills 6 million people each year, of which more than 600,000 are non smokers dying from breathing second hand smoke.² More than 80% of these preventable deaths will be among people living in low and middle income countries and is currently responsible for 10% of adult deaths worldwide.² Cigarette smoking leads to 90% of lung cancer deaths.³ More than 480,000 deaths each year in

United States are attributed to smoking and this is equivalent to about one in five deaths.⁴ A study from United Kingdom concluded that effortless access to illicit tobacco was the chief perpetrator for persistence of smoking.⁵ A study on African children reported that cigarette smoking increased with age among boys and this was attributed to watching actors smoking in TV shows.⁶ Prevalence of smoking in Pakistan is also found to be alarming.⁷ Low educational status is the key element endorsing cigarette smoking among males, irrespective of their socio-economic status.⁸ In Pakistan, cigarette is found to be the major form of tobacco used, while people of India and Bangladesh are also equally fond of bidi.⁹ Despite of numerous relevant studies, still knowledge and attitude evaluation regarding cigarette smoking of future health professionals is of paramount importance to secure future generation from this exterminating catastrophe. The aim of this study was to assess knowledge and attitude regarding cigarette smoking among medical students of our institution.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among total 975 medical students from first year to final year during June 2010 in Rawalpindi Medical College, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Informed consent was taken and anonymity was ensured. Data were collected by means of structured self-administered questionnaire regarding smoking history of sample and family members and friends, smoking on offer of a cigarette by best friend and discussion of injurious health effects of cigarette smoking by family members. Moreover, knowledge of medical students pertaining to the role of health professionals for reducing incidence of cigarette smoking in our society was also evaluated. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.

RESULTS

Opinion of the medical students about cigarette

smoking offered by their best friend is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Cigarette smoking by Medical students offered by best friend (n=975).

Class	Cigarette smoking on offer by the best friend	
	Definitely not	Definitely yes
1 st year	342	42
2 nd year	141	26
3 rd year	48	22
4 th year	159	25
Final year	132	38
Total	822	153

All the friends of 3.7% medical students were disclosed to be smokers while none of the friends of 59% respondents were indulged in smoking. Of all the study participants, fathers of the majority (157) were found to be smokers followed by elder brothers (85) and mothers (12).

Table 2. Views of medical students regarding duty of health professionals to eliminate cigarette smoking (n=975).

Role of health professionals	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Health professionals serve as role models for their pts. & public	527	237	77	86	48
Health professionals should set a good example by not smoking	690	186	42	27	30
Smokers chances of quitting smoking are increased if a health professional advises him or her to quit	327	360	170	85	33
Health professionals should routinely ask about their patients smoking habits	493	382	46	28	26
Health professionals should routinely advise their smoking pts. to quit smoking	543	331	42	30	29
Health professionals who smoke are less likely to advise people to stop smoking	417	372	84	66	36
Health professionals should get specific training on cessation techniques	523	338	63	24	27
Health professionals should speak to community groups about smoking	555	320	45	34	21

Harmful health effects of cigarette smoking were discussed with family of 61% of the medical students. Views of the medical students about role of health professionals pertaining to elimination of smoking habit from the communities are shown in Table 2.

DISCUSSION

In this study, all the friends of 3.7% medical students

were smokers where as results of a study carried out among Iranian medical students revealed that half or more of the friends of 8% students smoke cigarettes.¹⁰ 35.6% of Saudi Arabian medical students were also seemed to be influenced by their friends for smoking initiation.¹¹ The smoking friends therefore, play a vital role in smoking indulgence of any person accompanying them. The

parental monitoring is too of great significance in prevention of smoking among their children.

88.3% of respondents agreed with the fact that health professionals who themselves are not smokers should be specifically trained for imparting knowledge about smoking cessation. An International study also highlighted the need for health professionals' training, specifically for cessation of tobacco consumption.¹⁰ Likewise, 94.3% medical students of Catania University, Italy emphasized health professionals training to quit smoking.¹² These trained professionals will better be able to put their efforts for health promotion of the community. In present study, 70.5% medical students admitted that health professional's advice could be of great help to a patient in smoking cessation, as reported by an earlier study.¹³ So, the role of health professionals in our society is of paramount significance to arrest tobacco consumption.

In this study, fathers and mothers of 67.1% and 5.1% smokers respectively were also found to be smokers. Contrary to our study, no correlation was observed between smoking incidence among medical students of Poland and that of their parents.¹⁴ Apart from parent, several other societal and environmental factors contribute in smoking initiation that must be scrutinized for betterment of current scenario.

CONCLUSION

Education, information, legislation and regulatory measures are essential in smoking prevention programme. Organized group discussion, forceful motivation and counseling can modify smoking behavior. Trained health care providers can play a vital role in cessation of cigarette smoking.

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Conception and design: Imran Saeed Ali
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Drafting of the article: Rizwana Shahid
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