

Original Article

Assessment of Smoking Practices Among Male College Students

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Background: Smoking finds its roots in early adolescent life and lifestyle changes introduced at this level may prevent one from adopting this life threatening habit.

Objects: To assess the knowledge and practices of smoking among male college students.

Methods: 200 male students of a government college were interviewed using pre designed questionnaire. Data was analysed using Epi Info version 3.3.2.

Results: 85% did not know about any effect of smoking on health. Radio/TV was the main source of information. Most smokers were in 2nd year class (14%). Next was 4th year class (1.2%). Mean age was 18.5 years. Most of the smokers belonged to younger age group i.e. 17-19 years of age. More smokers belonged to urban areas (54.55%). Most of the smokers had parents who were businessmen (31.82%). The trend was highest in upper class (54.54%). Majority of the smokers developed the habit being inspired by their fathers (27.28%). Most of the boys (54.55%) smoked their first cigarette while they were at the college.

Conclusion: Major lifestyle modifications may help curb smoking and reduce the harm brought by this menace to mankind.

Keywords: Smoking, Lifestyle, Adolescent health.

Introduction

Smoking is a habit which is easily acquired but difficult to give up. Social factors, parents, teachers, school mates, fellow workers and friends exert strong influence in falling into the habit.

One starts it as a pleasurable hobby, but very soon becomes addicted. Smoking is the most important single preventable cause of illness and premature death in North America. The most important report about the health consequences of smoking in the United States was issued in 1964 by the Surgeon General Advisory Committee on smoking health. The principal conclusion in the committee's 1,50,000 words report was "cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the United States to warrant appropriate remedial action".

Two years earlier, in 1962 the Royal College of Physicians of London had released a study which concluded: "cigarette smoking is a cause of lung cancer and bronchitis, and various other less common diseases; it delays healing of gastric and duodenal ulcers".

Cigarette smoking remains the most important cause of preventable morbidity and early mortality. In 2000, there were an estimated 4.84 million premature deaths in the world attributable to smoking, 2.43 million in industrialized countries. More than three quarters (3.84 million) of these deaths were amongst men. The leading causes of death from smoking were cardiovascular disease

(1.69 million deaths), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (0.97 million deaths) and lung cancer (0.85 million deaths).

Nicotine is highly addictive, raises brain levels of dopamine and produces withdrawal symptoms on discontinuation. Cigarettes are responsible for one in every five deaths in the United States, yet smoking prevalence rates have been increasing among high school and college students. Cigar smoking has also increased. There is also continued use of smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco and snuff) particularly among young people. Tobacco dependence may have a genetic component. Smokers have twice the risk of fatal heart disease, 10 times the risk of lung cancer and several times the risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, pancreas, kidney, bladder and cervix. There is a twofold to threefold higher incidence of stroke and peptic ulcer, a twofold to fourfold greater risk of fractures of the hip, waist and vertebrae; four time risk of invasive pneumococcal disease.⁽¹⁾ There is increasing evidence that passive (or second hand) smoking has adverse effects on cardiovascular and respiratory health.⁽²⁾

Statistical information on smoking habit in Pakistan is scarce. It is estimated that no less than 15% of the adult population comes under category of smokers. Smoking in males predominates over the females. The type of smoking varies according to the social status. Those in high social strata smoke filter

cigarettes while the lower strata choose “BEEDI” (tobacco wrapped in a dried leaf). Also in the higher socio-economic group are those who prefer to smoke “cigars”.⁽³⁾ Shimao et al⁴ observed in his study on smoking and its control in Japan that the main reason for smokers wanting to quit this habit was worry over the bad effects of smoking on health. The major reasons given for continued smoking were dependency and lack of will power.⁽⁴⁾

British Medical Journal published the tobacco warning in its issue of 20th July 1991 “The warning, Tobacco seriously damages the health”.⁽⁵⁾ Zahoor Ahmad in his study of blood parameters and smoking patterns in Peshawar College found that 63% of ex-smokers had stopped smoking due to its adverse effects on health. 667 non-smokers stated that they were not smoking due to its harmful effects and 546 had considered that being an addiction it is prohibited in Islam.⁽⁶⁾ The present study was aimed at assessment of the knowledge and practices of smoking among male college students.

Material & Methods

A pre designed questionnaire was used to collect data from male students of a government college of Punjab province. All students were interviewed by the same person and all questions were asked from every student studied. The data was statistically analysed by entering it into Epi Info version 3.3.2.

Results

In our sample of 200 students 85% did not know about any effect of smoking on health, while 1% thought that smoking had good effect on health. Radio/TV was the main source of information. 65% of the students got information from Radio/TV, 30% from news papers while only 5% got information from other sources like posters and personal contacts. Most smokers were in 2nd year class (14%). Next was 4th year class (1.2%). Mean age was 18.5 years. Most of the smokers belonged to younger age group i.e. 17-19 years of age. More smokers belonged to urban areas (54.55%) than rural areas (45.45%).

Most of the smokers had parents who were businessmen (31.82%). The next to follow were agriculturists and government servants. Smoking trends were comparatively less among the students coming from middle class families. The trend was highest in upper class (54.54%). Majority of the smokers developed the habit being inspired by their fathers (27.28%); next were those who had developed this habit at their own (18.18%).

Most of the boys (54.55%) smoked their first cigarette while they were at the college and many of them became habitual smokers. Nearly one third 36.36% had not become habitual smokers.

Although most of the students know the hazards, out of 22, 12 smokers (54.55%) made attempts to give up smoking but they started again as reported by them. Only one succeeded in giving up the habit. The majority of the smokers managed the expenses out of the money they got from their parents. There were a few who got loans from class fellows (9.09%).

The main reasons for starting smoking were friends (36.36%) stresses (22.73%), to increase efficiency (13.64%), the show off (4.55%), friends + show off (9.09%), friends + efficiency (13.64%). Most of the smoking was done in the morning (45.5%), after meals (27.27%), at work (13.63%) or while going to bed (9.09%). Those who tried to give up smoking did so due to pressure of parents or due to some health problem, but all of them restarted except one.

Discussion

This study was conducted to assess the knowledge and practices of smoking among male college students. It was found that most of the college students are aware of the slogan “smoking is injurious to health”. Many of them also had knowledge about harmful effects of smoking on different organs, but they continued smoking. Actually, it is the addictive property of tobacco, which makes smokers to continue smoking. Moreover, the company of friends and stressful conditions create an urge for smoking.

It is also evident that Radio/TV is the main source of information in this era. Most of the students got information about harmful effects of smoking from radio & TV. However, attractive and beautiful advertisements of cigarette smoking played their role in recruiting new customers.

Dr. Liaquat conducted a study on 200 students from all classes in Punjab Medical College, Faisalabad, and found that more smokers were in final year M.B.B.S. In this study more smokers were found in younger age group between 16 and 18 years. This age is more prone to habitual smoking. All students in our study were day scholars. More students belonged to urban areas. Dr. Liaquat in his study found that three fourth of the smokers belonged to urban areas.⁽⁷⁾

Occupation of the parents has also influence on the habit of smoking of students. Most of the smokers had parents who were businessmen. Next were the sons of government servants. In general, smoking is

related with income level. Majority of the smokers developed the habit being inspired by seeing their fathers smoking. Next were those who had developed this habit at their own. It is apparent from this study that teenager smoking is influenced by the father's smoking and this influence is dominant on other factors. In this study, most of the boys smoked their first cigarette while they were at college and many of them became habitual smokers. This suggests that college period is perhaps the most important in determining the future smoking behavior. Although most of the college students know that smoking had harmful effects on health, only few seriously thought about giving up the habit. Malik in his study of problem of smoking and sloughing in educational institutions came out with the finding that majority of the parents/guardians of smokers were either businessmen or government servants. Most of the smokers, who were teenagers, belonged to upper class families. The majority of the family members of the smokers were already in the habit of smoking. Majority of the smokers attributed their habit to their friends.⁽⁸⁾

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the present study are:

1. Majority of college students know that smoking has injurious effects on health (85%).
2. Major source of information about injurious effect of smoking was radio/TV. Newspapers are the next important source of information.
3. Majority of the smokers were in younger age group, half of the total being teenagers.
4. Majority of smokers were in 2nd year class.
5. Most of the respondents were from urban area

6. the rest from rural area (54.55% from urban while 45.45% from rural area)
7. Most of the smokers were the sons of businessmen and therefore belonged to upper socioeconomic class.
8. Most of the respondents developed the habit through their parents.
9. Most of the respondents smoked their first cigarette when they were in intermediate class.
10. Out of 22, approximately 2/3 of respondents were habitual smokers.
11. 54.55% of the respondents made attempts to give up smoking habit but only 3.84% (one) was successful and the rest restarted smoking again.
12. The great majority of smokers consumed 10-20 cigarettes per day.
13. 72.73% of the smokers, met their expenses of smoking out of the pocket money provided by their parents.
14. The peer group was a vital factor that implanted habit of smoking.
15. Most of the cigarettes were consumed in the morning, after meals, at work or before going to bed.
16. The majority of the respondents who made attempts to give up smoking did so due to pressure from the parents or due to some health problems.

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