

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## INSPIRATION FOR SMOKING AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS OF ABBOTTABAD, PAKISTAN

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**Background:** Doctors are the best person to persuade their patients to quit smoking. Trend of smoking among young doctors is increasing day by day. The present study was conducted to observe the source of inspiration and smoking trends among medical students. **Methods:** An observational study was conducted through a self-administered questionnaire from medical students of Ayub Medical College Abbottabad. **Results:** A total of 230 students participated in this study and out of these 210 were males and 20 were females. Forty-eight students (20.86%) started smoking at the age of less than 15 years and 143 students (62.17%) started smoking between the age of 15–20 years and 39 students (16.95%) started smoking after 20 years of age. A total of 147 students (63.91%) were inspired by their friends, 32 (13.91%) by media, 39(16.95%) by family members. Out of these 230 students 87 students (37.82%) smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day and 143 students (62.17%) smoked less than 10 cigarettes per day. **Conclusion:** Most of students started smoking at young age and their friends were source of inspiration.

**Keywords:** Medical Students Smoking Source Of Inspiration

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## INTRODUCTION

By the end of the twentieth century, cigarettes killed approximately five million people annually worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Cigarette smoking is one of the important factor affecting not only the health of the smoker himself but also the people around him. The harmful effects of smoking usually appear during the later stages of life. It has become the third leading risk factor affecting mortality, after increased cholesterol and blood sugar, in the global burden of disease for individual age above 25 years.<sup>2</sup> Cigarette smoking is one of the major cause of death, in American continent with reported mortality rates of 14.6 per 1000 for men and 6.7 per 1000 for women.<sup>3</sup>

In developed countries, smoking is discouraged in public places but in developing countries like Pakistan its trend is increasing. Tobacco use in Pakistan is highly prevalent as much as 33% in middle aged group.<sup>4</sup>

In the last couple of years certain measures are being adopted to decrease its prevalence. Country-wide awareness programmes about the hazards of smoking, ban on cigarette advertisements in local television networks and dissuasion of tobacco cultivation have been major strategic interventions.<sup>5</sup> In spite of these efforts the prevalence of cigarette smoking is high in students, more in non-medical students as compared to the students of medical sciences in some countries such as Japan.<sup>6</sup> In countries like Slovakia and Brazil there is also an increasing trend of cigarette smoking among medical students.<sup>7-9</sup>

Doctors have an obligation to educate their patients about the harmful effects of smoking. The

present study was conducted to observe the source of inspiration and smoking trends among medical students.

Objectives of study were to observe the age and source of inspiration for smoking among the medical students of Abbottabad.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted from March 2012 to May 2012. The study population included medical students of Ayub medical college Abbottabad. A self-administered questionnaire was given to students from First to Final years of MBBS. Students who smoked were asked to complete and return back the questionnaire. Consents were obtained and the questionnaires were anonymous. Information obtained was about the number of family members who were smokers, age at which smoking started reasons for starting smoking, number of cigarettes per day, thoughts of quitting smoking and source of inspiration. The questionnaires were distributed in each class after necessary explanations by a researcher. Response rate was also calculated based on the number of students present in each class and the number of questionnaires filled out and returned. Data was analysed using SPSS-16.0.

## RESULTS

A total of 230 students were included in this study and out of these 210 were males and 20 were females. Among male students there were 14 students of first year, 30 of 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 106 of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 10 of 4<sup>th</sup> year and 50 students of final year MBBS.

Among females, 2 students were of first year, 9 of 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3 of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1 of 4<sup>th</sup> year and 5 students

belonged to final year class. Regarding smoking among family members, 101 students (43.91%) had no member involved in smoking while 69 students (30%) pointed to their father and 60(26.08%) students pointed to their brothers. A total of 48 (20.86%) started smoking at the age of less than 15 years and 143 (62.17%) started smoking between the age of 15-20 years and 39 (16.95%) started smoking after 20 years of age.

A total of 147 students (63.91%) were inspired by their friends, 32 (13.91%) by media, 39(16.95%) by family members while 7 students started smoking for fun and 5 students started smoking in order to decrease anxiety as shown by graph. As far number of cigarettes per day are concerned, 87 (37.82%) smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day and the rest smoked less than 10 cigarettes per day. Majority of students (56.95%) thought about quitting smoking. Regarding reasons for not quitting smoking 113 students (49.13%) did not quit smoking because of addiction, 79 (34.34%) students because of lack of will power and 38 students (16.5%) did not quit smoking because of company of other smokers (friends).

## DISCUSSION

All around the world smoking is increasing in college students and college years appear to be a greater risk to smoking initiation and progress from irregular and social smoking to more regular smoking.<sup>10</sup> Medical professionals especially doctors are considered a role model for the patients.

The present study was conducted to observe trends of smoking among medical students who are future doctors. In this study a limited number of students were willing to participate because in countries like Pakistan smoking is still socially unacceptable and that's the reason of a very low number of female students responding in our study.

Majority of our students were in 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Similar results were shown by Amnah Kramat.<sup>11</sup> When family influence was checked 43% had no member involved in smoking. While 57% had involvement of father or brother in smoking. This is in contrast to a study by Khan *et al* in which 73% of participants were not influenced by parental smoking.<sup>12</sup> In our study 62% of students started smoking at age of 15–20 year. A study by Mubeen<sup>13</sup> showed average age of smoking was 18.8 year and similar age was shown by Omair.<sup>14</sup>

In our study 62% of students smoked less than 10 cigarettes per day. This is not much different from the study of Waqar where average numbers of cigarettes were 12 per day.<sup>15</sup> Friends were major source of

inspiration for smoking in our study. Similar results were shown by Amnah Kramat.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Majority of students started smoking at young age of 15–20 years and their friends were source of inspiration. There is great need to expand anti- smoking campaigns among medical students.

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