TRENDS OF SMOKING AMONG MEDICAL AND DENTAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:
The prevalence of cigarette smoking by college students increased through the 1990s but has since leveled off and seen decreases in recent years. Education on the dangers of cigarettes is seen as a leading cause for this decrease. This activity is being less socially acceptable than it was in the past. This survey study was conducted among different medical and dental college students of different medical and dental colleges. The relevant information about smoking habits and its causes were collected on a predefined proforma. A total of 45 medical and dental students participated in the study. The mean age was 22.78±1.01 years. Out of 45 students 15 including 14 males and one female were chain smokers i.e. they used to smoke 1-2 packs per day. Thirteen including 9 males and 4 females were occasional smokers i.e. they used to smoke for fun or during any stress phase. Seventeen were non-smokers.

Keywords: Smoking, Medical Students, Dental Students
INTRODUCTION:

Smoking is a practice in which a substance is burned, and the resulting smoke is breathed in to be tasted and absorbed into the bloodstream. Most commonly, the substance used is the dried leaves of the tobacco plant, which have been rolled into a small square of rice paper to create a small, round cylinder called a cigarette. Smoking is primarily practiced as a route of administration for recreational drug use because the combustion of the dried plant leaves vaporizes and delivers active substances into the lungs where they are rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream and reach bodily tissue. In the case of cigarette smoking these substances are contained in a mixture of aerosol particles and gases and include the pharmacologically active alkaloid nicotine; the vaporization creates heated aerosol and gas into a form that allows inhalation and deep penetration into the lungs where absorption into the bloodstream of the active substances occurs. In some cultures, smoking is also carried out as a part of various rituals, where participants use it to help induce trance-like states that, they believe, can lead them to spiritual enlightenment.

Smoking generally has negative health effects, because smoke inhalation inherently poses challenges to various physiologic processes such as respiration. Diseases related to tobacco smoking have been shown to kill approximately half of long-term smokers when compared to average mortality rates faced by non-smokers. Smoking caused over five million deaths a year from 1990 to 2015. Smoking is one of the most common forms of recreational drug use. Tobacco smoking is the most popular form, being practiced by over one billion people globally, of whom the majority are in the developing countries. Less common drugs for smoking include cannabis and opium. Some of the substances are classified as hard narcotics, like heroin, but the use of these is limited as they are usually not commercially available. Cigarettes are primarily industrially
manufactured but also can be hand-rolled from loose tobacco and rolling paper. Other smoking implements include pipes, cigars, bidis, hookahs, and bongs.

The prevalence of cigarette smoking by college students increased through the 1990s but has since leveled off and seen decreases in recent years. Education on the dangers of cigarettes is seen as a leading cause for this decrease. This activity is being less socially acceptable than it was in the past. Cigarette smoking on college campuses has become an important public health issue and there has been increase in campus wide smoking bans and other preventive programs to reduce the rates of students smoking. The cause of these bans is now starting to be discovered and there is controversy that goes along with implementing them across various schools in the United States. Protests smoking bans are a possible threat at schools such as the University of Vermont and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Some smokers may also choose to neglect the bans and continue to smoke cigarettes regardless (1-4).

MATERIAL OF METHODS:

This survey study was conducted among different medical and dental college students of different medical and dental colleges. The relevant information about smoking habits and its causes were collected on a predefined proforma. All the data was kept confidential. All the data was analyzed with SPSS Ver. 23.0. Relevant statistical analysis was performed. The qualitative variables were presented as frequency and percentages. The quantitative variables were presented as mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS:

A total of 45 medical and dental students participated in the study. There were 31 males and 14 females. The mean age was 22.78±1.01 years. Out of 45 students 15 including 14 males and one female were chain smokers i.e. they
used to smoke 1-2 packs per day. Thirteen including 9 males and 4 females were occasional smokers i.e. they used to smoke for fun or during any stress phase. Seventeen were non-smokers. Out of 28 smoker students 20 were medical students and only 8 were dental students.

**DISCUSSION:**

Today’s smoking culture includes a subpopulation of smokers called social smokers. Although there may be different explanations of what a social smoker is, many college students define social smokers as those who use tobacco in more social activities and find it essential for socializing, rather than using tobacco on a regular basis, dictated by nicotine dependence. Social smokers are not addicted to smoking, or worried about the social acceptability of their smoking habits. In a study conducted in 2004, 51% of current college smokers stated that they primarily smoked with other people and in social activities. 71%
of occasional smokers smoked in a social situation, compared to daily smokers, 19% of which smoke in social environment.

Students who started smoking within the past two years of the study were more than twice as likely to be social smokers than students who had been smoking for a longer period of time prior to the study. Characteristics of social smokers have been found to include more females and non-Hispanic whites than other demographic characteristics, spent more time socializing with friends, were binge drinkers and had a high importance for the arts. Lastly, social smokers don’t perceive themselves at risk to tobacco related illnesses, nor believe they will ever become nicotine dependent. Since social smokers don’t think they’ll become dependent on nicotine, they don’t plan on quitting during college, but have intentions to quit once they graduate (5-8).

REFERENCES:
