

Awareness about Tobacco use among Medical Students of Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

Background: Worldwide tobacco is the second most common cause of death. It is the biggest enemy of public health, still people smoke knowing well the consequences. In addition to the high public health costs of treating tobacco-caused diseases, tobacco kills people at the height of their productivity, depriving families of bread winners and nations of a healthy workforce. Tobacco addiction mostly starts at adolescence. Various reasons cited by adolescents being: peer pressure, stress or for fun. **Research Question:** What is the level of awareness regarding tobacco use among medical students? **Objectives:** To assess awareness about tobacco abuse among medical students of Uttarakhand. **Study Design:** Cross-Sectional epidemiological study. **Settings and Participants:** Medical and Dental students of all professionals excluding Interns of two Medical and two Dental colleges of Uttarakhand were selected for survey. **Study Period:** May 2008 to October 2008 **Sample Size:** 400 Medical and Dental students. **Sampling Technique:** Simple stratified random sampling. **Study Variable:** A predesigned, pretested, self-administered questionnaire was used for collecting information on Age, Sex, Socio-demographic profile, Knowledge and awareness regarding Tobacco use, etc. **Statistical Analysis:** Standard statistical package i.e. SPSS, Microsoft Excel. **Results:** Life time prevalence of tobacco use was found to be 31.75%, the most common reasons cited by students was peer pressure 33.7%. The level of awareness regarding the harmful effects of tobacco smoking was found to be 91.8%. Majority 68.3% of tobacco users think that media plays an important source for creating awareness about harmful effects of tobacco. 83.25% students are against tobacco advertisements and support ban, 84.75% on tobacco use in public place. 83.75% students surveyed believed that the preventive measures taken up by the Government are not sufficient.

Key words: Tobacco Use, Adolescents

Introduction:

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death globally, contributing to more than 5 million estimated deaths every year and if current smoking patterns continue; it will cause some 10 million deaths each year by 2020 i.e. about 650 million people will eventually be killed by tobacco⁽¹⁾. According to WHO estimates, about 194 million men and 45 million women use tobacco in smoked or smokeless form in India⁽²⁾.

WHO estimates that in India, 65% of all men use some form of tobacco (about 35% smoking, 22% smokeless tobacco, 8% both)⁽³⁾. The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) is the largest programme globally, pioneered by centre for disease control and prevention (CDC) of USA and WHO. Global Youth Tobacco Survey conducted in Delhi, India shows that one in 10 students (10%) had ever used tobacco in any form⁽⁴⁾.

Experience has shown that there are many cost-effective tobacco control measures that can be used in different settings and that can have a significant impact on tobacco consumption. Tobacco addiction mostly starts at adolescence. Various reasons cited by adolescents as to why the addiction started were related to peer pressure, that it gives a feeling of being great/ powerful or just for the sake of fun.

Hence, the present study was undertaken to assess the prevalence of tobacco use among undergraduate medical and dental students in Uttarakhand; to assess their awareness towards tobacco use, its control & cessation activities.

Material and Methods:

The present cross sectional descriptive questionnaire based study was conducted from May 2008 to October 2008 among 400 undergraduate medical and dental students of 04 different medical and dental colleges in the state of Uttarakhand. (i.e. Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences, Dehradun; Sri Guru Ram Rai Institute Medical Sciences and Research, Dehradun; Seema Dental College Hospital, Rishikesh and Sushila Tiwari Forest Hospital Trust, Haldwani).

By using simple stratified random sampling 100 students were selected. students from each of the college for the study; this sample of 100 students was further equally distributed by randomization among males and females of all the four professionals equally i.e. 12 Males and 13 Females in first professional, 13 Males and 12 Females in Second Professional, 12 Males and 13 Females in Final Professional part – I and 13 Males, 12 Females in Final Professional thus constituting a sample size of 100 in each college. A predesigned, pretested, self-administered

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questionnaire was used after taking informed consent from the participant for collecting the information regarding their Age, Sex, Socio demographic profile, knowledge, and awareness about tobacco use, etc. Data was compiled and analyzed using standard statistical package i.e. SPSS, Microsoft Excel.

Results:

Among the 4 selected medical and dental colleges, all colleges participated in the survey giving college-response rate as 100%. A total of 400 students in Uttarakhand completed the survey giving a student response rate of 100%. The findings of the observations are presented in the following tables:

The overall Prevalence of current tobacco use was found to be 33% among students with the prevalence of chewable tobacco i.e. - Gutkha, Paan, Khaini, etc. was 11% and non-chewable tobacco i.e. - Cigarette, Bidi, etc. was 22%.

Table No. 01 Distribution in percentage of Students according to Age

Name of Medical College	HIMS (n=100)	SIMS (n=100)	SDCH (n=100)	STFHT (n=100)
Age Groups				
17-20 Yrs	41	49	23	29
21-25 Yrs	58	50	74	67
>25 Yrs	1	1	3	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

*(HIMS: Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences, SIMS: Shri Guru Ram Rai Institute Of Medical Sciences and Research, SDCH: Seema Dental College And Hospital, STFHT: Sushila Tiwari Forest Hospital And Trust.)

Table No. 02 Prevalence of Current Tobacco user

Name of Medical College	HIMS (n=100)	SIMS (n=100)	SDCH (n=100)	STFHT (n=100)
Chewable	11	9	9	12
Non Chewable	22	10	28	26
Both	9	3	4	8

Table no. 03 represents the level of awareness regarding tobacco control & cessation activities among students that shows 83.5 % of students were against tobacco advertisement and those who support ban on tobacco use in public places were 84.5% whereas when they were asked whether this ban on tobacco products is useful or not, only 57.75% responded it to be useful. Further, when they were asked to quantify the level of satisfaction for the steps taken by the Government for preventing this epidemic only 16.25% were satisfied.

Table No. 03 Perception of Students for Tobacco Control & Cessation Activities

	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Support to Tobacco Advertisement	23	77	7	93	17	83	19	81
Support Ban On Tobacco Use In Public Places	82	18	91	9	82	18	84	16
Ban On Tobacco Products Useful	60	40	53	47	45	55	73	27
Is Sports Sponsorship By Tobacco Companies Right	27	73	14	86	21	79	25	75
Prohibit Sale Of Tobacco Products	72	28	92	8	82	18	80	20
Are Steps Taken By Govt. Sufficient	12	88	13	87	10	90	30	70

Multiple responses were given by an individual participant

It was found that overall level of awareness among current tobacco users about harmful effects of tobacco use either in non-chewable or chewable form was found to be 93.25 % and 97.73 % respectively. Though when the current tobacco users were assessed for their attitude towards quitting of chewable and non-chewable tobacco it was found to be 22.5 % and 50.75 % respectively (Table no 04).

Table No. 04 Awareness about harmful effects of Non-Chewable Tobacco among current Tobacco users

Name of Medical College	HIMS (n=100)		SIMS (n=100)		SDCH (n=100)		STFHT (n=100)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	21	95	10	100	26	93	22	85
No	1	5	0	0	2	7	4	15
Total	22	100	10	100	28	100	26	100

Awareness about harmful effects of Chewable Tobacco among current Tobacco users

	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	10	91	9	100	9	100	12	100
No	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	100	9	100	9	100	12	100

Attitude towards Quitting Chewable Tobacco use among current Tobacco users

	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	5	23	1	10	8	29	7	27
No	17	77	9	90	20	71	19	73
Total	22	100	10	100	28	100	26	100

Attitude towards Quitting Non-Chewable Tobacco use among current Tobacco users

	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	4	36	3	33	6	67	8	67
No	7	64	6	67	3	33	4	33
Total	11	100	9	100	9	100	12	100

Discussion:

The present study was conducted among 400 medical students of various medical and dental colleges of Uttarakhand with the prevalence of non-chewable tobacco of 22 % that is in higher than that reported by Gavarsana et

al in which the prevalence of non-chewable tobacco was found to be 18%⁽⁵⁾. Though when compared with study by Sinha & Gupta the prevalence was found to be 43%⁽⁶⁾. The prevalence of chewable tobacco use (Gutkha) is however was low (11%) in comparison to Sinha & Gupta, which showed a prevalence of 12.5%⁽⁶⁾. Majority of them have strong opinion about banning tobacco and tobacco product's sale, advertisement and use in public places. Most of the studies had highlighted the high level of awareness among responders about the harmful effects of Smoking i.e. Smokeless tobacco use causes oral cancer, oesophageal cancer (if chewed with betel quid), and contributes to cardiovascular diseases⁽⁷⁾.

As reported in earlier studies among college students globally, a majority of the students want to quit using tobacco products⁽⁸⁾ whereas, in present study only a small number of students were willing to quit both, non-chewable (smoking: 24.5%) and chewable tobacco (Gutkha etc: 51.2%). Nearly 75% of youth smokers have seriously thought about quitting, 56% of high school and 50% of college smokers have tried to quit in the past year, and most of those who have tried to quit have failed. Most adolescent smokers know they are addicted and want to quit. However, young people do not think there are resources to help them quit, many clinicians do not feel well prepared to counsel adolescents about quitting smoking, and resources for adolescent cessation have are not widely available⁽⁹⁾.

Conclusions:

The increasing prevalence of tobacco use in any form among student is of great concern. The existing legislations related to tobacco products/use is already under review but there is a need of strict implementation of the same. Government and public should jointly make efforts to stop tobacco production, sale and its use. If the current trend of tobacco use continues persist it may become a massive threat to public.

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