

Prevalence, Knowledge & Attitude Towards Smoking Among the Hospital Employees

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Health care professionals are expected to play an active role in educating public against hazards of tobacco smoking. Prevalence of smoking is on rise particularly in developing countries including Pakistan and at the same time knowledge about the hazards of smoking is lacking among the public. In our study we have assessed the prevalence, knowledge and attitude towards smoking among the hospital employees. We carried a questionnaire-based survey on the hospital employees on smoking. A total of 98 hospital employees working at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Lahore were included in the survey and a questionnaire was filled after interviewing. The age range was 25 to 58 years with a mean of 41 years. Only male employees were included. Out of total 98 employees 58 (59%) were non-smoker and 40 (41%) were smokers. When asked about the smoking history of family members, quite surprisingly 72 (73.5%) had no smokers in the family. Eighteen (18.4%) had father as smoker and 8 (8.2%) had brother as smoker. When questioned as hazards related to smoking, 94 (95.9%) strongly agreed that smoking is hazardous to health and 4 (4.1%) disagreed. Regarding source of information about hazards of smoking majority 92 (93.9%) got information from television, 4 (4.1%) from Radio and only 2 (2%) got information by doctors. In 40 smokers when interviewed in detail, regarding type of smoking majority, 39 (97.5%) were smoking cigarettes and only 1 (2.5%) were Huqqa smoker. Five (12.5%) were smoking less than 10 cigarettes, 26 (65%), 10-20 day, 9 (22%) more than 20 cigarettes day. Thirty-seven (92.5%) were smoking filtered cigarettes and remaining 3 (7.5%) were smoking non-filtered cigarettes. When questioned about why they smoke, thirteen (32.5%) said that they relax after smoking, 4 (10%) have smoking peer, while 23 (57%) had multiple reasons. Regarding attempts at quitting smoking, 30 (75%) never tried to quit while 10 (25%) attempted quitting, but did not succeed. In non-smokers, the reasons for not smoking were different. One (1.7%) had non-smoking parents, 4 (6.9%) were self-determined not to smoke while 53 (91%) were not smoking because of expenses. This study shows that even in hospital employees the prevalence of smoking is high and knowledge relevant to tobacco and its hazards is limited. More health education is required by doctors regarding smoking.

Key words: Cigarette smoking, quitting the smoking & questionnaire.

Prevalence of smoking is on rise particularly in developing countries. In 1997 WHO report says that tobacco related deaths primarily for lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases amount to 3 million/year are 6% of total deaths. Smoking accounts for one in seven cancer death world-wide¹.

Tobacco use is very common in Pakistan, about 34% of men and 12.5% of women use some form of tobacco on regular basis². Smoking is increasingly important cause of preventable disease, disability and premature death in the developing countries³.

The fact that use of tobacco is injurious to human health is now well established, even the tobacco industry has accepted this fact. Tobacco smoking is the cause of at least 85% cases of Lung cancer, Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema.^{4,5,6}

Smoking in addition to causing early deaths, also contributes to Asthma⁷.

Subjects and Methods

The basic aim of study was to know the prevalence, pattern and knowledge of smoking in the hospital employees. Study was done in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital and 98 persons working in different wards and OPD/Operation theatre of

Sir Ganga Ram Hospital were included. The employees were interviewed and questionnaire was filled by medical officer working in Chest Department.

Results

A total of 98 employees were included, the age range was 25-58 years with mean age of 41 years. Fifty-eight (59%) employees were non-smokers, while 40 (41%) were smokers. When these employees were questioned about hazards related to smoking, 94 (95.9%) persons strongly agreed that smoking is injurious to health, while only 4 (4.1%) totally disagreed with this fact. Regarding source of information about hazards, 92 employees (93.9%) said that television is helpful, 4 (4.1%) said that radio is helpful, while only 2 (2%) said that doctors told them about the hazards of smoking. Regarding type and number of cigarette smoked by these employees, 39 (97.5%) were smoking cigarettes, while only 1 (2.5%) was Huqqa smoker. Out of forty, 5 (12.5%) were smoking less than 10 cigarette per day, 26 (65%) were smoking 10-20 cigarettes per day, while remaining 9 (22.9%) were smoking more than 20 cigarettes per day. Thirty-six (92%) employees were using filtered cigarettes, while 3 (7.5%) were using non-filtered cigarettes.

Thirteen (32.2%) said that they smoke to relax, 4 (10%) had smoking peers, while 23 (57.5%) had multiple reasons for smoking, when questioned about attempts to quit smoking, 30 (75%) never tried or even thought of quitting, while 10 (25%) tried to quit, but failed.

In case of 58 non-smokers, the main reason for not smoking was expenses, 53 (91%) were not smoking due to expenses.

Discussion

Our study confirms the high incidence of smoking among Hospital employees. Although in our study a total of 98 employees were included, out of which 40(41%) were smokers. Different studies have been done in Pakistan and abroad to know the prevalence, knowledge and attitude toward smoking.

In one study done in Pakistan 21.6% (36% males and 9% females were smokers), 20.7% in urban and 22% in rural area males were smokers⁸. In Newzealand only 5% males and females doctors were smoker⁹. In Australia 27% of males and 23.2% of females were tobacco smoker¹⁰.

Students and poor people are more likely to be caught by smoking industry. In Bangladesh 29% students and 68% of slums dwellers said they were smokers¹¹.

The prevalence of smoking among University students in Turkey were 42.5%, highest in students of faculty of arts and lowest in faculty of medicine (60.9% v/s 33.9%)⁽¹²⁾.

Similar studies have been done in Young Medicos and the hospital attendants of Agha Khan University Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan, which shows that there is high incidence (11%) of smoking in young medicos and 40% males and 7% females hospital attendants were using tobacco^{13,14}.

Most tobacco use increases with age. According to National Health Survey in Pakistan, smoking cigarette is more common in men aged 25-44 years and in women aged 45-64 years².

In our study the mean age of smokers were 41 years, although there is increasing trends of advertisement of smoking on television, yet still 92 (93.9%) of employees told that television is helpful for giving the information that smoking is injurious to health. Other media like newspapers, films and radio were not of much help. Only 2 employees said that doctors told them about the hazards of smoking.

Although 94(94.9%) who were smoking strongly agreed that smoking is injurious to health, but they have not tried to quit and only 10% tried to quit, this shows that although they are aware of hazards of smoking, but due to addiction, they were unsuccessful in quitting smoking.

Majority 36 persons (92%) were using filtered cigarettes with the false concept of safe cigarette. 32 persons had multiple reasons for smoking and 13 were smoking to relax indicating that more recreational facilities should be available to employees.

Conclusion

This study shows that even in the employees working in the hospital, the prevalence of smoking is high and knowledge related to its hazards is limited. Health professional especially doctors should fight against tobacco by conveying information to their patients about tobacco and about stopping tobacco use. Hospital employees should be exemplary models for the public by not using tobacco themselves. Those who wish to quit smoking should be provided information and help to assist them in stopping smoking. We should also follow the example of other nations and completely ban on smoking in hospitals except in few designated areas. In the mean time those who do not smoke should continue to demand healthier and smoke free environment at work. More health education is required at every level to discourage the persons from smoking, which is considered as the single largest preventable cause of death and disease in the world to day.

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