

Cigarette Smoking Habits among Qatari Population

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Abstract

Objectives: *The aim of this study is to estimate the prevalence of smoking habits, and explore their attitudes toward cigarette smoking among Qatari population.*

Design: *A cross sectional community based survey conducted.*

Setting: *The Capital City Doha, including urban and rural areas.*

Subjects: *To select study subjects, we used World Health Organization questionnaire following the multi-stage stratified cluster sampling technique procedures. 3000 subjects aged 15 years and above selected randomly. The questionnaire included personal, social, educational characteristics of the respondents, smoking status, duration of smoking and daily cigarette consumption. A total of 2444 (81.5%) gave consent for the study.*

Main outcome measures: *Association between current smoking and socio-demographic variables using univariate and multivariate analysis.*

Results: *The prevalence of smoking among the studied group was 36.5% and the rest 63.5% denied that they have ever smoked in their lives. 71.9% reported friends as the first source of their cigarette. The response to the question "what do you believe makes people smoke?". 49% of the smokers claim that friend's effects is the most important factor while 45% social acceptance comes as the second most important factor. Overall in the present study, results revealed that forbidden smoking in public places and stopping advertisement are the best ways of prevention.*

Conclusion: *Well organized anti-smoking programs are needed in the Qatari community. One third of the population are already regular smoker as concluded from this study. A percentage which is liable to increase as they are starting school, university, work and academic carrier, but this percentage can be decreased if we know and admit that we have a problem and react adequately and effectively.*

Key Words:

Cigarette smoking; health education; teenage; adult; males, females; psychological and socio-economic factors; Qatar.

Introduction

The effects of smoking constitute the single largest cause of preventable disease and death throughout the world.¹ A lot of data from many parts

of the world showed that the death rate for smokers is greater than for nonsmokers whatever the listed cause of death.² It was suggested that the best way to discourage smoking is by approaching children and adolescents since most people start smoking in their teenage years. Similarly children and adolescents should reject smoking if it is offered to them but first they must recognize that it is harmful to health.³⁻⁴ Of the 54 million Americans who smoke 90% began smoking as a teenager.⁵ Approximately 1 million young Americans each year become regular smokers in spite of the legal proscriptions on the purchase of tobacco products in 43 of the states but, in Britain² nearly one million people give up smoking every year. There is a substantial decline in smoking prevalence in the developed countries but the opposite is true in the developing countries.^{6,7} This can be due to the lack of proper educational programs and the lack of effective measures for controlling such epidemic. Despite the decline, nearly one in every five deaths in the United States is caused by smoking.¹ The harmful effects of smoking not only affect the smoker but also the non-smoker. Children of parents who smoke have a higher frequency of respiratory infections and decreasing lung capacity as the lung matures.⁸

Most studies from Britain and the USA have shown that at the age of 16 years 25% of British boys admit to being regular smokers.⁹ From the neighboring countries the prevalence of smoking was measured in, Bahrain 26.4%,¹⁰ in Saudi Arabia where the smoking prevalence was vary among high school children 7.8% and 37% in Saudi Arabia,¹¹⁻¹² in Kuwait¹³ 30%, in Jordan¹⁴ 17%. Furthermore in Japan¹⁵ 37%, in Greece¹⁶ 22.3%, in Ireland¹⁷ 16-21%, in Australia¹⁸ 25%, in China¹⁹ 14-23%. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), although smoking as a health hazard is existing²⁰ and its effect is highly noticed by all physicians in practice in UAE.²¹

There are no nationwide studies on the prevalence of tobacco smoking having been performed in Qatar. The aim of this study is to estimate the prevalence of the smoking habits, and explore their attitudes toward cigarette smoking among Qatari population.

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