

**Tobacco Use, Exposure to Secondhand Smoke,
and Cessation Counseling Among Health
Professions Students: Kingdom of Bahrain,
Global Health Professions Student Survey
(GHPSS), 2009**

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Abstract

Introduction: Tobacco use is one of the major health hazards facing the world globally. It is estimated that there are more than one billion smoker in the world. Approximately 80% of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18.

Methods: Global health profession smoking survey (GHPSS) is a part of Global tobacco surveillance system. , a school- based survey of the third year students of medical and nursing schools, the final questionnaire used by EMRO region has two languages . All medical and nursing schools in Bahrain containing 3rd year students were included in the sampling frame. All students within these schools were surveyed.

Results: GHPSS was carried out on 397 students of the third year. Among Medical students, 10.9% currently smoked cigarettes; and the prevalence for current cigarette smoking among nursing students is 9.4%. Among Medical students 16.3% currently used tobacco products other than cigarettes. The current prevalence for other tobacco use among nursing students is 10.8%. Around half (**44.2%**) of the current other tobacco users in the Medical schools want to quit using tobacco, and only half of the current smokers (**48.7%**) ever received help or advice to stop smoking.

Conclusions: Bahrain GHPSS revealed that students from both disciplines had a high prevalence of current cigarette smoking and a current tobacco use. Tobacco control programs should target tobacco users among healthcare professions students to overcome this situation. Educational institutions, public health organizations, and education officials should discourage tobacco use among health care professions students.

Acknowledgment

I would like to convey my deepest gratitude and appreciation for the Dean of the medical and nursing college ,Bahrain for helping me during conducting this study as they spared no efforts in providing me with the suitable environment to proceed with this study,

The students from both medical and nursing college who contributed in the study, they were more than wonderful, I thank them very much for their cooperation

My deepest regards to both colleges coordinators who assisted me in collecting the data during survey performance and I wish them all the best.

Last but not least I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart The center of disease control(CDC),EMRO and the ministry of health ,Bahrain in providing me with useful information that brought this work to light may I wish them all the best and god bless them.

1. Introduction:

Tobacco use is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced. There are more than one billion smokers in the world. Globally, use of tobacco products is increasing, although it is decreasing in high-income countries. Tobacco use kills 5.4 million people a year and accounts for one in 10 adult deaths worldwide. If current trends continue, there will be up to one billion deaths in the 21st century. Unchecked, tobacco-related deaths will increase to more than eight million a year by 2030, and 80% of those deaths will occur in the developing world (1).

Tobacco is a risk factor for six of the eight leading causes of deaths in the world (2). The vast majority of tobacco users and smokers are hooked when they are children. Almost half of the world's children breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke (1).

From the country profile of the EMRO region, it was clearly noted that there is a high prevalence of tobacco consumption among adult (approximate $38 \pm 13\%$) and young ($19 \pm 12\%$) males in the responding states, and these figures are 3.5 – 5.5 times higher than corresponding prevalence rates among females, respectively. Almost half of the countries in the EMRO region have national tobacco control programs and most of them (55 – 85%) have legislations, which ban smoking in health facilities, educational facilities, public transportation, and in the media (3).

Among the HMC/GCC Member States, adult males are significantly more likely than adult females to smoke. Male rates are highest in Yemen (77%) and lowest in United Arab Emirates and Oman (18.3% and 15.5%, respectively), whereas

female rates are highest in Yemen (29 %) and below 2% in the other countries, except Bahrain (5.7%) (1).

Tobacco in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

Bahrain does not grow tobacco or manufacture cigarettes, thus all cigarettes available in the market are imported, almost exclusively from Europe and North America. There are four main types of tobacco available in Bahrain (cigarette, water pipe, cigar and pipe). Smokeless tobacco was introduced to Bahrain and started to spread through schools but the ministry of health started to investigate this issue and how it was spread and it was stopped by them.

In the Kingdom of Bahrain, despite decades of health promotion and tobacco control legislation, tobacco use is still prevalent among adults and teenagers. Data show that around three-quarters of ever-smokers, including current smokers and ex-smokers, reported that they started to smoke regularly between the ages of 15 and 18 years (4).

The latest East Mediterranean non-Communicable survey done in 2007 with the cooperation with WHO, showed that the prevalence of using any type of tobacco was 19.9% (M:33.4%-F:7.0%), while that of smoking cigarettes or cigars was 14.7%(M: 28.7-F: 1.3), and for the sheesha was 8.4% (M: 10.8%-F: 6.1%) (Unpublished).

The recent trend towards water pipe smoking is also a source of concern. The prevalence of water pipe smoking was 9.7% among Bahraini male physicians and 3.1% among Bahraini female physicians (5).

The majority of smokers believe that water pipe smoking is not damaging to health and many cigarette smokers switch to the water pipe while they attempt to quit (6-7).

Tobacco control strategy in Bahrain

The history of tobacco control in Bahrain dates back to 1978, when a number of control measures were implemented for the first time, including raising custom duties on cigarettes to 70%, regulating the permissible level of tar and nicotine per cigarette and restricting cigarette advertising. The following year (1979) a nongovernmental organization (NGO), the Bahrain Anti-smoking Society, was formed. The society works in collaboration with the Bahrain government to advocate for tobacco control through prevention activities and lobbying for law review and law enforcement.

In 1994 a tobacco control decree was issued by the Emir of Bahrain to reinforce the antismoking measures. The law also called for the formation of a committee to include members representing different parties involved in the tobacco control plan. The National Tobacco Control Committee was established in 1995.

Bahrain has ratified the FCTC (Framework Convention of Tobacco Control) and became a party in March 2007, and a new law by a loyal decree has recently approved and started in action in 2009 replacing the amiri decree of 1994, and it is broader and stricter than the previous one. A lot of activities are going on in the kingdom to fulfil the articles of both the FCTC and the national law where they strengthen each other; also there are curtains legislations by ministerial orders to control the sheesha and the sheesha café's.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

The GHPSS is part of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System, which collects data through four surveys: the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, the Global School Personnel Survey, the Global Adult Tobacco Survey, and the GHPSS. The GHPSS is a school-based survey of 3rd year students pursuing advanced degrees in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, and nursing.

Sample description:

In the Kingdom of Bahrain, there are two medical schools and two nursing schools contain 3rd year students, all of them were included in the survey. All medical and nursing schools containing 3rd year students were included in the sampling frame. A census was done of all medical and nursing schools. All students within all schools were surveyed.

The Bahrain GHPSS was conducted in the nursing schools during regular lectures and class sessions, while for the medical schools, student were in the hospital field, so different approach was used to collect the data, in one of the medical schools, data was collected through their meeting with their research supervisors, and for the second school student were found through their reporting to the receptionist for their clinical rotations.

Questionnaire:

Anonymous, self-administered data collection procedures were used. The final GHPSS questionnaire used was the one used by EMRO region which has two languages (Arabic and English) it was translated into Arabic and back-translated into English to check for accuracy.

Analysis:

Epi – Info 2000, a software package for statistical analysis of complex survey data, was used to calculate weighted prevalence estimates and standard errors (SE) of the estimates (95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated from the SEs).

Overall response rate:**Medical schools:**

Schools - 100.0%

Students- 67.2% 119 of the 177 sampled students completed usable questionnaires

Overall response rate - $100.0\% * 67.2\% = 67.2\%$

Nursing schools:

Schools - 100.0%

Students- 81.3% 218 of the 268 sampled students completed usable questionnaires

Overall response rate - $100.0\% * 81.3\% = 81.3\%$

Use of the weighted results:

The results can be used to make important inferences concerning tobacco use risk behaviors of 3rd year Medical and Nursing students in Bahrain.

This report includes information on current cigarette smoking, current use of tobacco products other than cigarettes, exposure to SHS at home and in public places, and the extent to which schools have official policies banning smoking in school buildings and clinics, and if the policies are enforced. In addition, attitude questions were asked regarding: health professionals as role models for their patients, whether health professionals think they should get training in patient cessation techniques, and if they have ever received formal training on such cessation counseling techniques.

3. Results

3.1 Student Characteristics

The percentage of Medical students who were females was 70.5% and 98.4% were less than age 25, while 88.2% of Nursing students were females and 58.2% were less than age 25.

3.2 Tobacco Use

Among Medical students, 10.9% currently smoked cigarettes (Table 1). The prevalence for current cigarette smoking among Nursing students is 9.4%.

Among Medical students, 16.3% currently used tobacco products other than cigarettes (Table 1). The current prevalence for other tobacco use among Nursing students is 10.8%.

For both health professions, male uses significantly more tobacco (cigarettes & other tobacco) compared to females.

Table 1. Lifetime and Current Prevalence of Tobacco Use among Third-Year Medical and Nursing Students

	All Respondents			Current Use	
	Ever smoked cigarettes	Ever smokers who initiated daily cigarette smoking before age 16 years	Ever used chewing tobacco, snuff, cigars, or pipes	Cigarettes	Chewing tobacco, snuff, cigars, or pipes
	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)
Medical Students					
Total	32.1 (27.4 - 37.2)	37.2 (28.1 - 47.3)	36.2 (31.3 - 41.3)	10.9 (8.0 - 14.5)	16.3 (12.9 - 20.5)
Women	23.5 (18.5 - 29.3)	42.7 (28.7 - 57.9)	30.9 (25.5 - 37.0)	6.1 (3.7 - 9.9)	9.4 (6.4 - 13.7)
Men	51.8 (42.4 - 61.2)	32.8 (21.6 - 46.3)	48.6 (39.3 - 58.0)	21.6 (14.9 - 30.4)	32.9 (24.7 - 42.3)
Nursing Students					
Total	37.0 (33.8 - 40.3)	56.1 (50.1 - 61.9)	32.5 (29.5 - 35.6)	9.4 (7.6 - 11.5)	10.8 (8.9 - 13.0)
Women	32.7 (29.4 - 36.1)	52.6 (45.7 - 59.3)	28.1 (25.0 - 31.3)	4.1 (2.9 - 5.8)	6.4 (4.8 - 8.4)
<i>Men</i>	63.9 (54.0 - 72.7)	62.4 (49.2 - 73.9)	68.4 (58.6 - 76.8)	45.8 (36.4 - 55.6)	37.0 (28.4 - 46.6)

3.3 Exposure to Secondhand Smoke (SHS)

Among medical students, 27.9% reported that they had been exposed to SHS in their home in the past 7 days. Similarly, 33.9% of Nursing students reported SHS exposure at home (Table2).

Among Medical students, 50.4% reported that they had been exposed to SHS in public places in the past 7 days. Similarly, 46.6% of Nursing students reported SHS exposure in public places.

The proportion of Medical students reporting their schools have an official policy banning smoking in school buildings and clinics was 58.7%, and 39.4% of Nursing students (Table 2). From the students who reported that they have official policy, the proportion who reported that such policies are enforced was around 88% among both the Medical and Nursing students.

Among Medical students who had ever smoked, 35.0% smoked on college premises/property, and 7.2% smoked in college buildings during the past year.

For the nursing students, from those who had ever smoked, 19.9% smoked on college premises/property, and 3.3% smoked in college buildings during the past year.

Table 2 Policy and Exposure to Secondhand Smoke among Third-Year Medical and Nursing Students

	Ever Cigarette Smokers			All Respondents		
	Smoked on college premises/property during the past year	Smoked in college buildings during the past year	Colleges with an official policy banning smoking in college buildings and clinics	Colleges that had an official policy banning smoking in school buildings and clinics that enforced the ban	Exposure to smoke at home during the past week	Exposure to smoke in public places during the past week
	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)	% (CI)
Medical Students	35.0 (25.1 - 46.4)	7.2 (3.2 - 15.1)	58.7 (53.4 - 63.8)	88.1 (82.8 - 91.9)	27.9 (23.5 - 32.8)	50.4 (45.2 - 55.6)
Nursing Students	19.9 (14.2 - 27.0)	3.3 (1.3 - 8.2)	39.4 (36.2 - 42.7)	88.0 (84.1 - 91.1)	33.9 (30.9 - 37.0)	46.6 (43.4 - 49.9)

More than 90% of both medical and nursing student thought that smoking should be banned in all enclosed public places and more than 85% of all students (Medical & Nursing) thought that sales to adolescents should be banned. (Table 3)

Table 3. Attitude towards banning of tobacco in enclosed public places and sales to minors

	Should smoking any tobacco product (cigarettes, sheesha, or other tobacco products) in all enclosed public places be banned	Should tobacco (cigarettes, sheesha, or other tobacco products) sales to adolescents (persons younger than 18 years old) be banned
	% (CI)	% (CI)
Medical Students	93.6 (90.6-95.7)	89.8 (86.2-92.6)
<i>Nursing Students</i>	96.5 (95.0- 97.5)	88.6 (86.4- 90.6)

3.4 Health Professional Roles and Training

Over 91.5 % of the Medical students and 93.5% of the Nursing students thought health professionals have a role in giving advice about smoking cessation to patients (Table 4). Over 92% of the Medical students and 93.0% of the Nursing students thought health professionals should get specific training on cessation techniques. The percentage of health professions students reporting that they had ever received some kind of formal training in their professional school on cessation approaches to use with their patients ranged from 37.4 % among Medical students to 52.5% among Nursing students.

Table 4. Cessation, Education and Perception of Responsibility to Counsel Patients among Ever Smokers, Third-Year Medical and Nursing Students

	Current Users of Other Tobacco Products who want to quit using other tobacco products now	Have you ever received help or advice to help you stop using cigarettes		Percentage Answering “Yes”		Do health professionals have a role in giving advice or information about tobacco use cessation to patients	Learned cessation approaches to use with patients
		%	(CI)	%	(CI)		
Medical Students	44.2 (28.4 - 61.2)	48.7 (33.0-64.7)	82.4 (78.1 - 86.0)	92.6 (89.4 - 94.9)	91.5 (88.0-94.0)	37.4 (32.5 - 42.6)	
Nursing Students	*	50.0 (36.8- 63.2)	86.3 (83.8 - 88.4)	93.0 (91.1 - 94.5)	93.5 (91.6-94.9)	52.5 (49.3 - 55.8)	

*cell size is less than 10

From Table 4 we can see that around half of the current other tobacco users in the Medical schools want to quit using tobacco, in the other hand, only half of the current smokers ever received help or advice to stop smoking cigarettes.

4. Discussion

Findings from the Bahrain GHPSS show that students from both disciplines had a high prevalence of current cigarette smoking and a current tobacco use. The prevalence of current cigarette smoking and other tobacco use was lower among female students (6.1% for medical students and 4.1% for nursing student). Tobacco use endangers the health of health professions students and negatively influences the future health professions workforce to deliver effective anti-tobacco counseling when they start seeing patients (8).

The tobacco control programs should target tobacco users among health professions students to overcome this situation. Educational institutions training health professions students should help their students quit using tobacco by providing encouragement and information to students who are considering quitting and providing assistance to students who are motivated to quit. Especially that result from the survey has shown that almost half of those who use other types of tobacco want to quit using them.

The proportion of Medical students reporting their schools have an official policy banning smoking in school buildings and clinics was 58.7%, and 39.4% of Nursing students. Around half of health professions students in Bahrain reported they were exposed to SHS in public places; this should alarm the higher authority for considering better enforcement of the articles of the national law which prohibits smoking in public places and to start issuing tickets for those who break the law. More than 40% of the students reported their schools have an official policy banning smoking in school buildings and clinics; this should make the authority in the educational institutes advocate for their policies in better way so it can reach all the students and the other employees within their institute. Enforcement of the school

policies is considered moderate. Educational institutions training health professions students should be encouraged to provide smoke free work and study areas by banning smoking in their buildings and clinics. A smoke free work environment has been shown to encourage cessation attempts among smokers trying to quit, and receive high levels of public support from people who spend time in the area (9). Furthermore, the creation of smoke free areas by health education institutions sends a clear message to educators, students, patients, and clinicians about negative impact of tobacco (10).

Health professions students have been found to play an important role in cessation and prevention of tobacco use among their patients. Counseling by health professions students has been shown to increase smoking cessation (11, 12). Therefore, health professions students should be trained to provide effective, accurate, and accessible advice to patients on all aspects of health. The Bahrain GHPSS data show that a high percentage of the health professional students has a positive attitudes which should be encouraged, as over 80% of both medical and nursing students think that health professionals serve as role models for their patients and the public, and over 90% of both medical and nursing students think they should receive training on counseling and treating patients to quit using tobacco. However, only 37.4% of Medical students, and 52.5% of Nursing students have received formal training.

The Bahrain GHPSS surveyed 3rd year students, so it is possible that students receive training on patient cessation techniques during the latter years of their programs, or the programs they receive either they are not sufficient or not stressed on and considered as a priority. To address these possibilities, the GHPSS research coordinators should raised this question to the school administrators. Professional training for health professions students should include courses detailing the harmful

health effects of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, and training in counseling on tobacco cessation techniques (11, 12, 13, and 14).

Curricula should include a course or supplements to existing courses specifically relevant to tobacco issues.

Efforts should be made to assess and share the content of tobacco control components within the formal training curricula and continuing education courses for health professions students. Further research should be carried out to assess the impact of existing tobacco control-related materials and training provided in health professions schools in a variety of cultural and economic environments. The products from such research could form a compendium of “best practices” of patient counseling for training health professions students relevant to countries with a broad spectrum of health resources and infrastructures.

5. Conclusions

Educational institutions, public health organizations, and education officials should discourage tobacco use among health professions students and work together to design and implement programs that train health professions students in effective cessation-counseling techniques. The Bahrain GHPSS has shown significant unmet need for cessation assistance among health professions students as well as gaps in professional training to provide similar effective assistance to their future patients. The Bahrain GHPSS is helpful in evaluating the behavior and attitudes regarding tobacco among health professions students, but additional research is necessary to improve the evidence base for effective tobacco-related curricula, especially materials that are appropriate for a range of cultural and economic settings

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